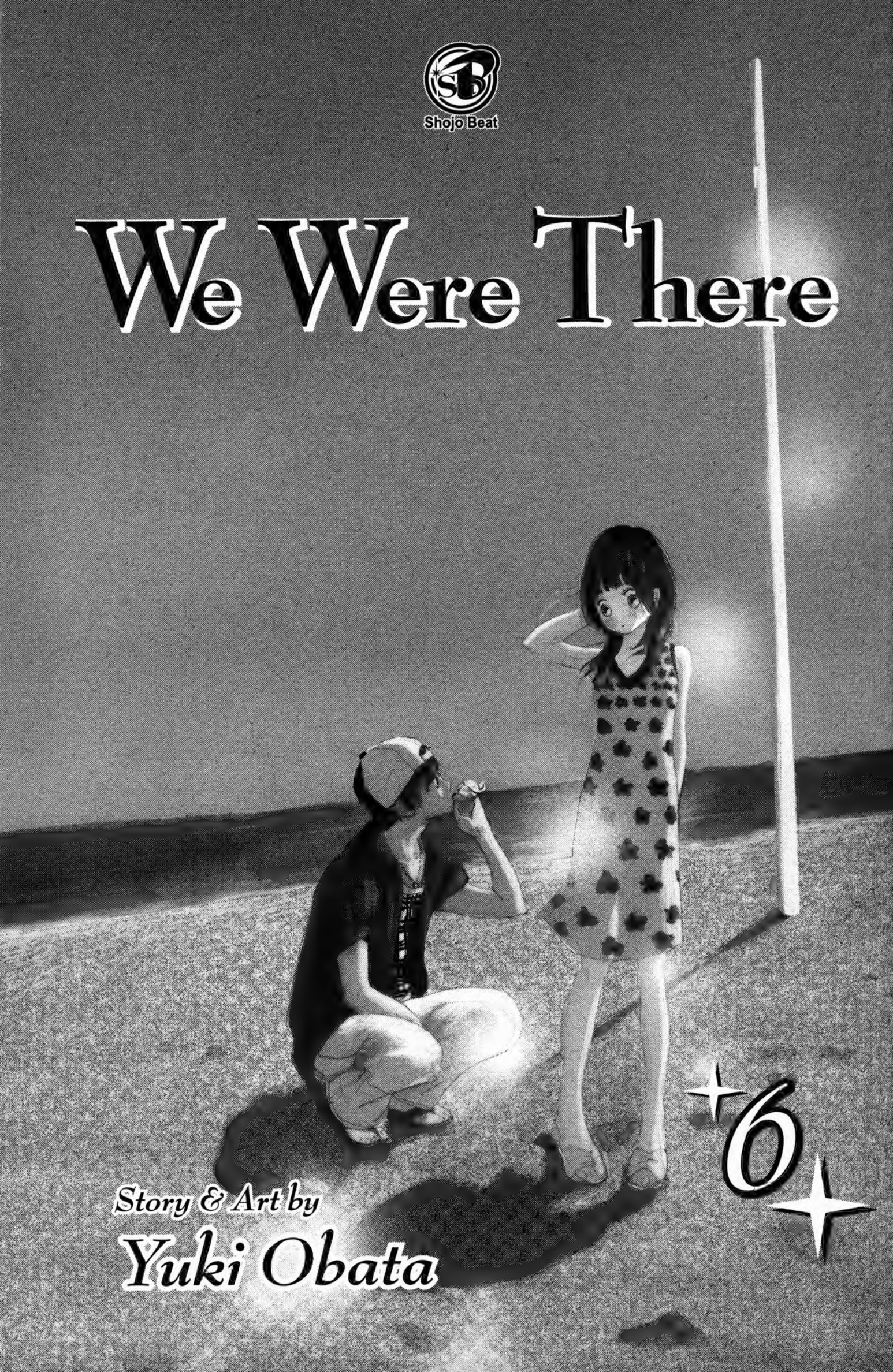
Shojo Beat
We Were There
6
Story & Art by
Yuki Obata

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Characters

Masafumi Takeuchi
Yano's childhood friend. He's kinder and more modest than Yano.

Nanami Takahashi
She's earnest but a bit forgetful at times.

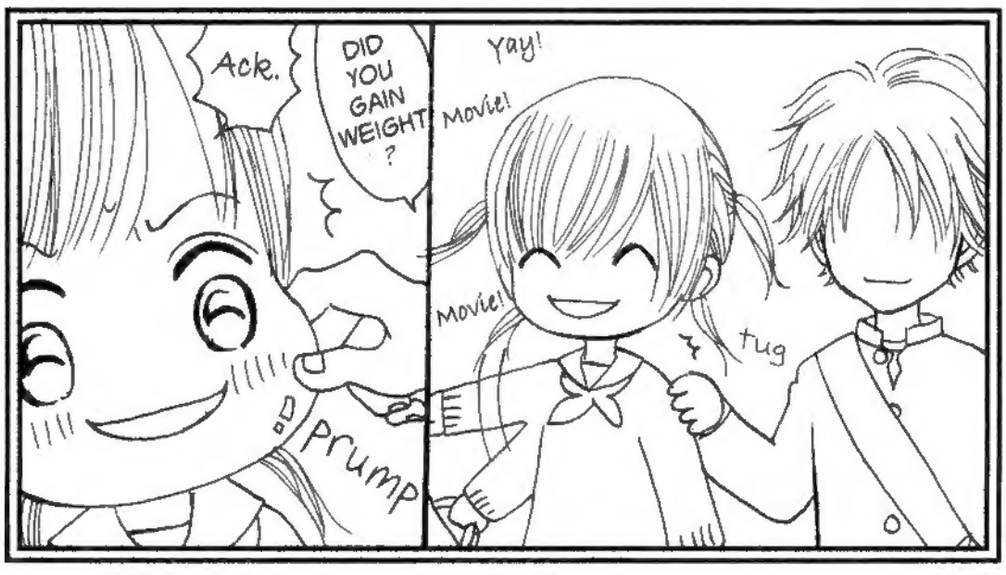
Motoharu Yano
Nanami's popular classmate. His girlfriend Nana-san died.

Story

Having fallen in love with Yano, Nanami gradually begins to get the hang of being his girlfriend. But realizing that Yano still can't forget his ex-girlfriend, she breaks up with him. Meanwhile, Takeuchi, who had hidden his feelings for Nanami, starts to make his move—even though he's been Yano's best friend until now...

Chapter 20

Nanami's School Life



Continued on page 108...

Bonfire!
Bonfire!
Don't we have a saw?
AND BRING EVERY-THING OVER TO THE CENTER, PLEASE ...
DISMANTLE THEM...
KUNK
HA HA HA
I CAN'T BREAK IT DOWN ANY SMALLER THAN THIS.
Phew...
IT'S FINE.
We'll just toss it into the fire like this.
WILL THIS EVEN BURN?
HA HA
Poff

I TAKE BACK WHAT I SAID TO YOU BEFORE.
...
HUH?
HA HA HA HA
ON THE NIGHT OF THE SUMMER FESTIVAL.
I'M NOT GOING TO SAY...
..."WE'LL ALWAYS BE FRIENDS NO MATTER WHAT" LIKE YOU.
NO ONE ELSE...
...CAN TAKE YOUR PLACE.

SO I'LL DO EVERYTHING I CAN...
...TO MAKE SURE WE STAY FRIENDS.
THIS REALLY IS LOVE CONFESSION TIME!!
HA HA HA.
JUST KIDDING!
I REALLY LIKE YOU, YOU KNOW.
HA...

DON'T FORGET ...
...THOSE WORDS.
I'M REALLY GLAD...
...YOU'RE MY FRIEND.

AAAAGH
FLAIL
SWEAT
SHMP
HOLD HIM DOWN!
KRK
HURRY UP AND GET THE ROPE AROUND HIM.
WH...
WHAT?!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!
What are you doing here?
NO HARD FEEL-INGS. ☆
MOTO!
Help me.
HEY...
"NO HARD FEEL-INGS" ?!

HUH?!
WHAT BETTER WAY IS THERE?
SO I'M NOT LETTING YOU CONFESS TO HER.
EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT ONCE TAKAHASHI AND I MAKE UP!!
WHAT A DIRTY TRICK!
WEREN'T YOU LISTENING BEFORE?
YOU'RE TOO SOFT.
I SAID I'LL DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO MAKE SURE WE STAY FRIENDS.

KEY
SEE YA LATER.
Take him up to the chemistry Lab on the second floor
SORRY ABOUT THIS.
I'LL LET YOU GO ONCE I'M DONE.
I LOVE YOU, TAKE-CHAN! ♡
I DON'T WANT YOUR LOVE CONFESSION!!
FWOOM
FSSH

Kyah!
There's music.
...LOVE CON-FESSION TIME!
IT'S STARTED ...
Ooh!
NO WAY!
LOOK— THOSE TWO OVER THERE.
WHAT, WE HAVE TO GET MARRIED NOW?!
HUH?
I DO!

YOU'RE CRAZY.
LISTEN UP BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO REPEAT MYSELF.
TAKA-
HASHI.

...MY HEART STILL POUNDS...
EVERY TIME I REMEMBER IT...
...AS IF IT WERE JUST YESTER-DAY.
Woo!

HA HA HA
UM.
Kyah!
EXCUSE ME...
COULD I TALK TO YOU FOR A SEC?
I...
SORRY.
HUH?
LATER.
Eh?
HUH?
LATER?
MIZUGUCHI!

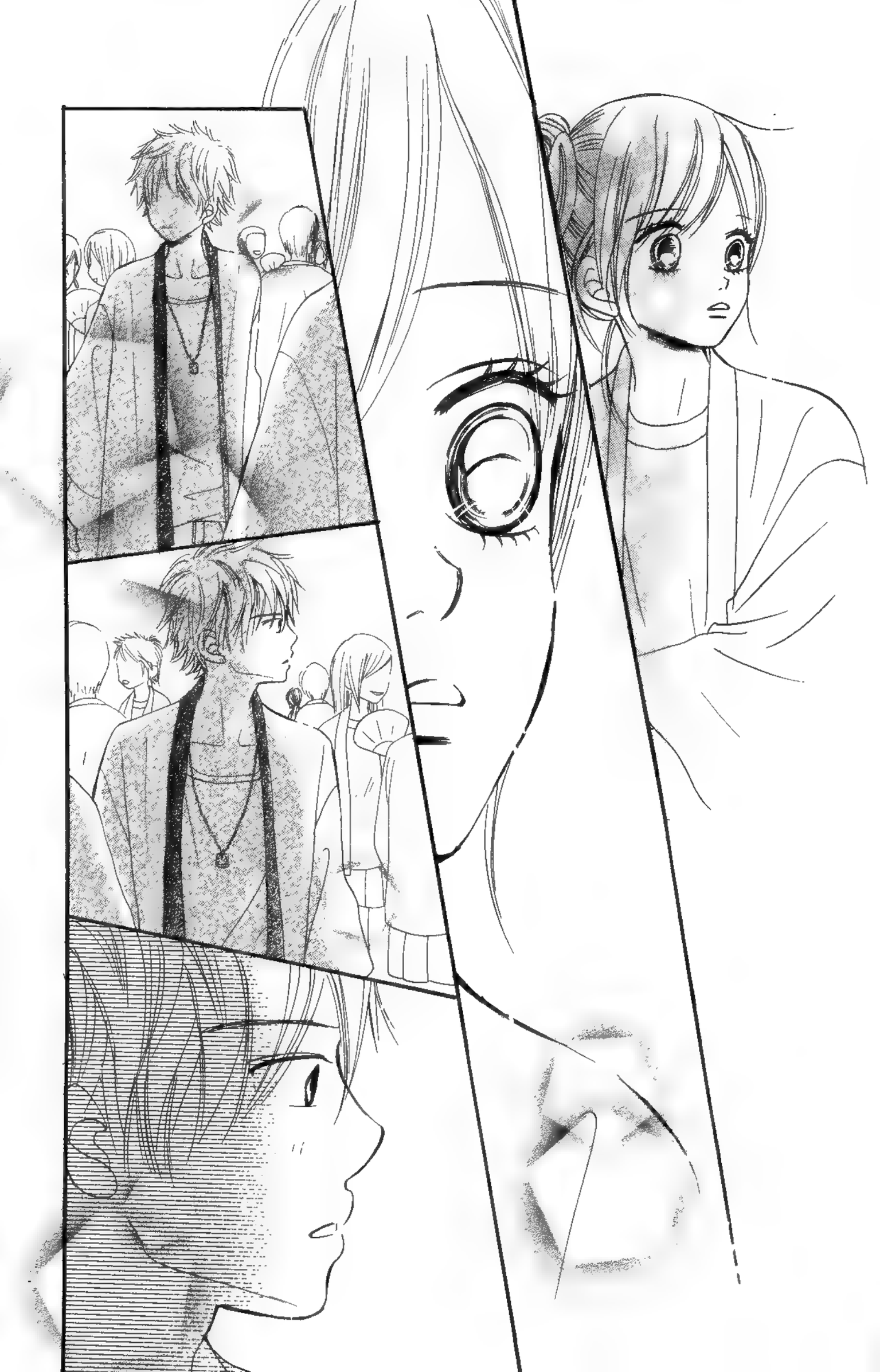
HELLO?
BLEEP
BLEEP
NANA, WHERE ARE YOU RIGHT NOW?
WHAT?
I'M HELPING OUT IN THE ANNOUNCE-MENT BOOTH.
I don't have anything better to do.
WHAT'S UP?
WHAT'S UP?!
HUH?
HE'S HERE!
THE ANNOUNCE-MENT BOOTH?
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE—TELL HER NOT TO MOVE.
AND ONE MORE THING
YANO'S COMING FOR YOU
OH.

NO...
THEY'RE BOTH COMING?
THINK CAREFULLY
BE-FORE YOU AN-SWER
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
NO WAY.
I HAVE A HUNCH THAT TAKEUCHI-KUN IS LOOKING FOR YOU TOO
IS TAKAHASHI HERE?!
SHE RAN AWAY, DIDN'T SHE?
SHE WAS HERE A MINUTE AGO...
Eh?
Huh?
WHERE DID SHE GO?
OH?

HA HA HA
HUFF
I JUST RAN AWAY...
...HOW I FEEL.
THUNK THUNK
CHEMISTRY LAB
Damn it!
They locked the door.
WHAT SHOULD I DO? WHAT SHOULD I DO?
I STILL HAVEN'T FIGURED OUT...
...INSTINCTIVELY.

SLUMP
I CAN'T DO IT! I'M SUCH A WUSS!!
I don't have the guts to break the glass.
krrk
He'd kick right through it without any qualms.
YOU'RE TOO SOFT.
CHAIR
...
I JUST HAVE MY OWN WAY OF DOING THINGS.

I CAN DROP DOWN TO THE ROOF OF THAT SHED.
IF I DON'T MAKE IT...
DMP
I'M COMING BACK AS A GHOST.
THUD
OW!
TAKAHASHI.
HA HA HA



SORRY, YANO...
I'M NO LONGER CONFIDENT ENOUGH TO MEET YOU.
HUFF
HUFF

WHERE IS SHE?
PICK UP.
THE NUMBER YOU'VE DIALED CANNOT BE REACHED
DAMN!
TAKAHASHI...

TAKA—
WHEN DID YOU—
LET GO!
TOUGH LUCK, YANO.
NO.
YOU'RE STAYING RIGHT HERE!
Aah!
I WON'T FORGIVE YOU!
ASS-HOLE!
Kyah!
What?
SAME HERE.

I'M GOING BEFORE YOU...
...NO MATTER WHAT!
YOU WANT TO FIGHT?
BRING IT ON!
STOP IT, YOU TWO.
FIGHTING...
...WON'T MATTER.

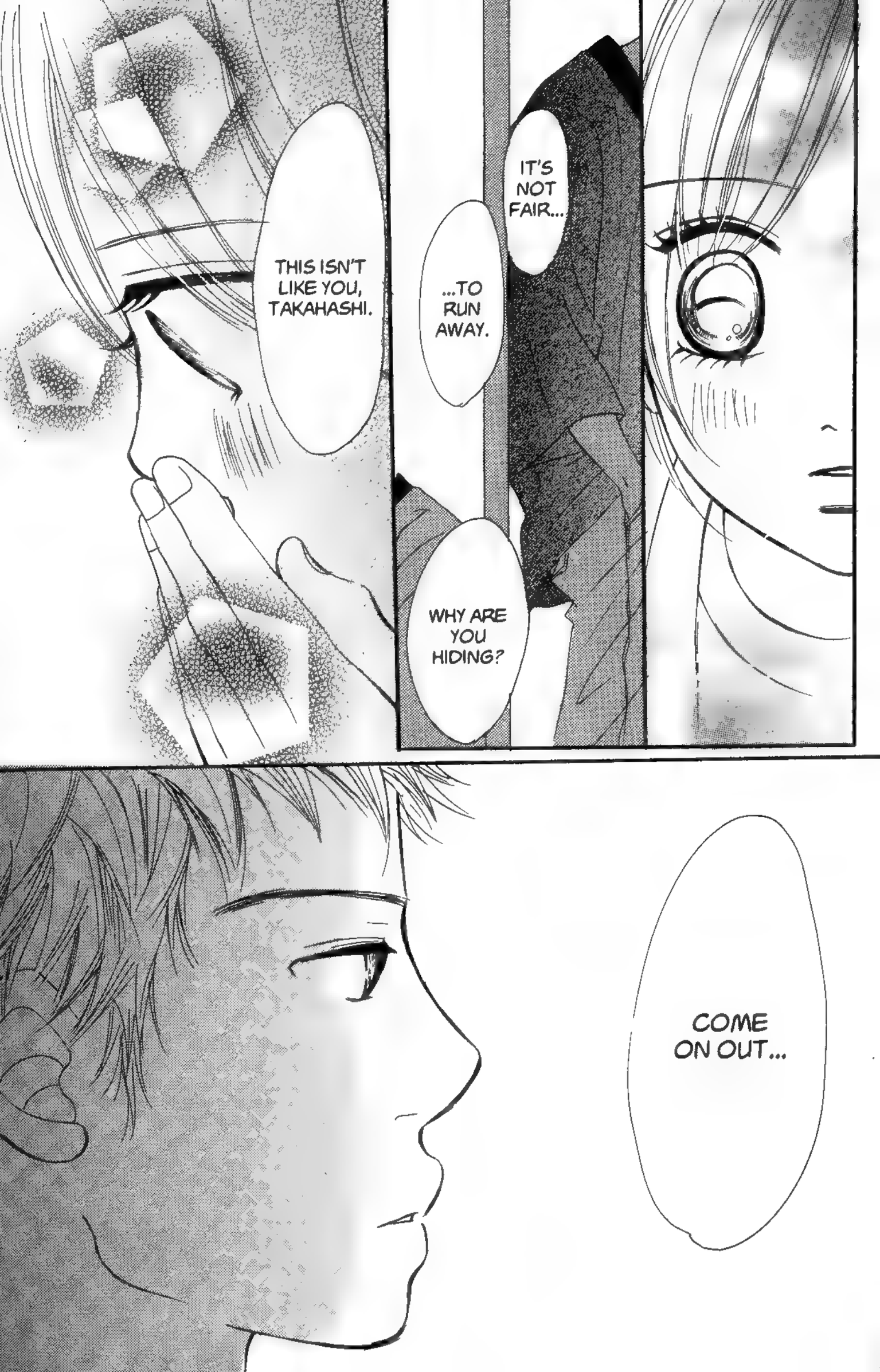
"I DON'T WANT TO TALK TO ANYBODY RIGHT NOW."
"SO LEAVE ME ALONE."
THAT'S WHAT...
...I'M SUPPOSED TO TELL YOU.
HUH?

IT MEANS SHE DOESN'T WANT TO HEAR...
...ANY-THING WE HAVE TO SAY.
THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS, RIGHT?
THAT'S HER ANSWER, ISN'T IT?
...
WHAT...
...IS THIS?

IF SHE DOESN'T WANT TO TALK TO US, WHY CAN'T SHE SAY SO TO OUR FACES?
WHY CAN'T SHE REJECT US HERSELF?!
YOU HAVE TO UNDER-STAND...
...NANA'S FEEL-INGS TOO.
I DON'T UNDER-STAND.

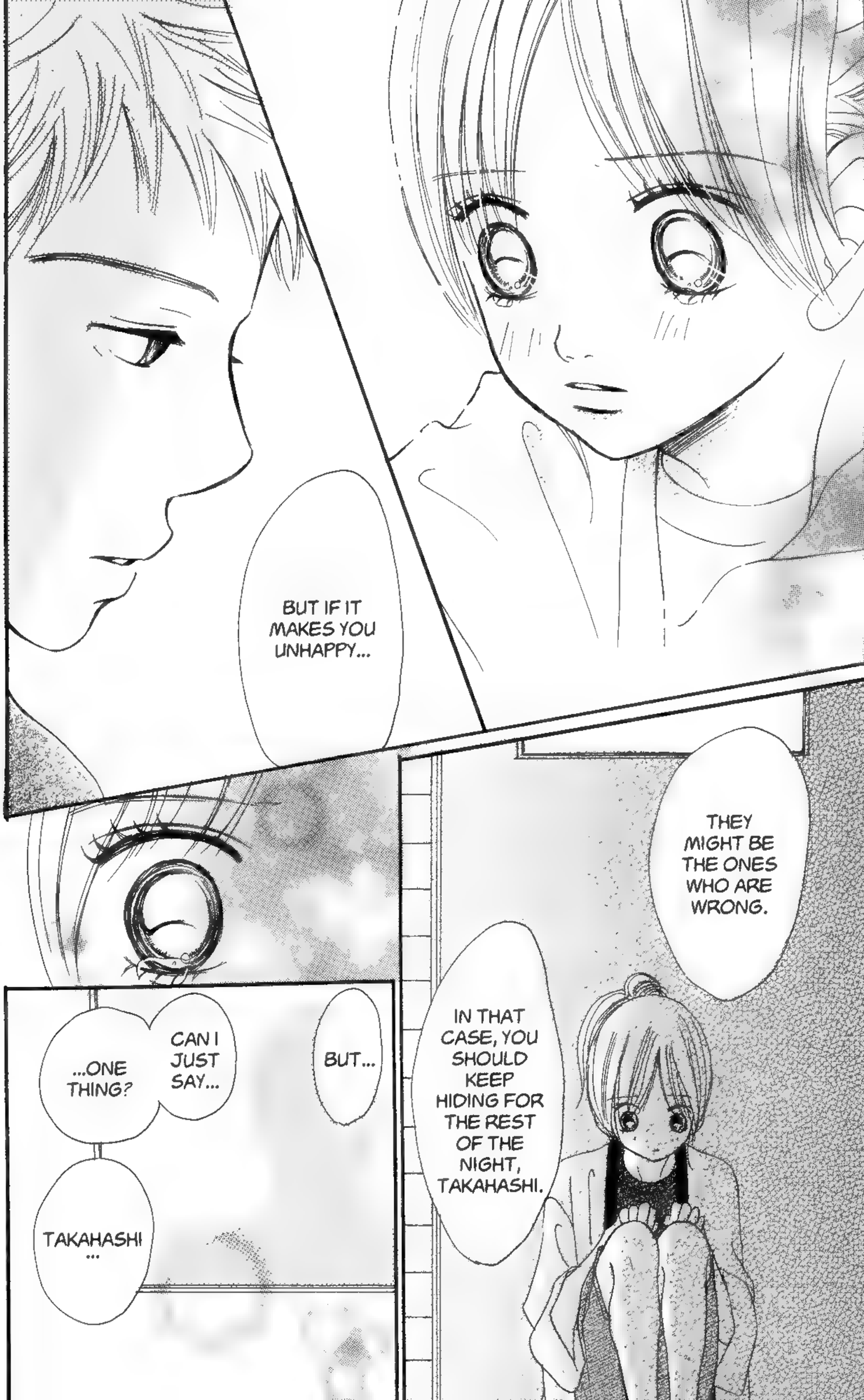
...
WELL ...
I CAN SEE IT FROM ... YANO'S SIDE TOO
SIGH
GIRLS BATHROOM

TAKA-
HASHI.
IF YOUR NEW LOVE IS REAL...
...THEN THE LOVE YOU FELT BEFORE WILL FADE AWAY NATURALLY.
WHAT IS "REAL" LOVE...
YOU'RE IN THERE, AREN'T YOU?
ANSWER ME.
...ANY-WAY?


THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU, TAKAHASHI.
...TO RUN AWAY.
IT'S NOT FAIR...
WHY ARE YOU HIDING?
COME ON OUT...

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO RESPOND!
BUT...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S BEST...
HOW NOT TO CRY OR FEEL GUILTY...
...OR WHAT I SHOULD DO.
NO MATTER HOW MUCH I THINK ABOUT IT, I CAN'T COME UP WITH THE ANSWER.
I DON'T WANT TO BE HURT AGAIN...

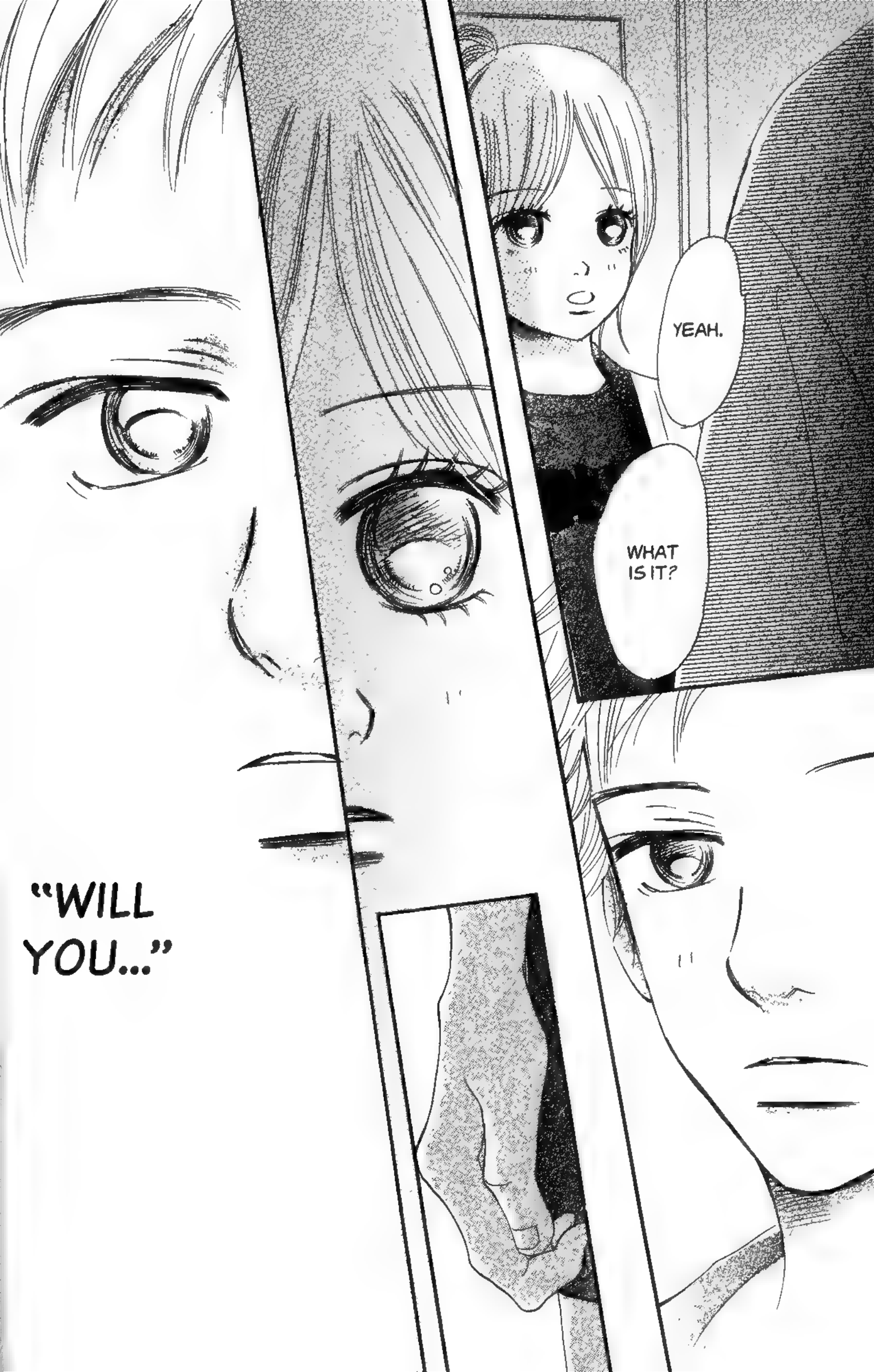
...AND I DON'T WANT TO HURT ANYONE EITHER.
...
HEY.
TAKA-HASHI.
NOBODY WANTS TO BE HURT, BUT...
BUT...
THE GUY...THE GUYS YOU DON'T WANT TO HURT...
...ARE PROB-ABLY...
...PREPARED FOR THAT.
AND NO ONE...
...WANTS TO HURT YOU EITHER.


BUT IF IT MAKES YOU UNHAPPY...
THEY MIGHT BE THE ONES WHO ARE WRONG.
IN THAT CASE, YOU SHOULD KEEP HIDING FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT, TAKAHASHI.
BUT...
CAN I JUST SAY...
...ONE THING?
TAKAHASHI ...

SO AT THE VERY LEAST...
...YOU SHOULD TRUST WHAT YOU KNOW SO FAR.
NOBODY KNOWS...
...WHAT THE BEST MOVE IS...
...OR WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS...
...UNTIL IT HAPPENS.
YOU HAVE TO GO BY...
...HOW YOU FEEL RIGHT NOW.

...YOUR ANSWER, DIDN'T YOU?
IT'S EASY.
YOU FOUND...
IS IT...
...POS-SIBLE TO RETURN...
...TO THOSE DAYS?
HOW I FEEL RIGHT NOW...
BYE.
NO ONE...

TAKEUCHI-KUN.
IS THAT ALL YOU WANTED TO SAY TO ME?
CHAK
...WANTS TO HURT YOU EITHER.
WAS THERE ...
...SOMETHING ELSE YOU WANTED TO TALK TO ME ABOUT?
SOME OTHER REASON ...
...YOU CAME HERE?


YEAH.
WHAT IS IT?
"WILL YOU..."

...IS LOOKING FOR YOU.
MOTO...
THAT'S WHAT I CAME HERE TO TELL YOU.
YOU SHOULD HURRY UP AND GO TO HIM.
HE'LL START SULKING.

I...
...HAVE TO RISE TO THE OCCASION AS WELL.
WHERE IS YANO?
PEOPLE CAN BE...
...SO KIND.
I'LL GIVE YOU ALL THE LOVE YOU NEED.

IT SERVES YOU RIGHT.
...
NANAMI, YOU LIAR.
I'LL ALWAYS BE WATCHING OVER YOU, YANO.

...DO WE FALL IN LOVE?
...BUT WE END UP GETTING HURT...
...AND WE RUN AWAY...
...ONLY TO CHASE AFTER IT AGAIN.
WE DON'T WANT TO HURT OTHERS...
WHY...

WHY ARE YOU HERE?
I THOUGHT YOU'D BE CRYING.
I'M NOT CRYING, DAMN IT...
I'M NOT.
YOU'VE ANNOYED ME FROM THE START...
YOU'RE SO SELF-ISH.
YOU STIR UP MY FEEL-INGS...
...GRAB HOLD OF THEM...
...AND THEN YOU LEAVE ME JUST LIKE THAT.
YOU'RE HEART-LESS.

BUT EVEN SO...
...I STILL LOVE YOU...
... DAMN IT.

"BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE, ISN'T IT?"
"I CAN'T CHANGE MY PAST."
"I'D CHANGE MY PAST IF IT WERE POSSIBLE."
SO WHAT WOULD BE A PRESENT...
...THAT'S BETTER THAN YOUR PAST?

YOU'RE HERE.
AND I'M HERE.
IT'S SIMPLY THIS...

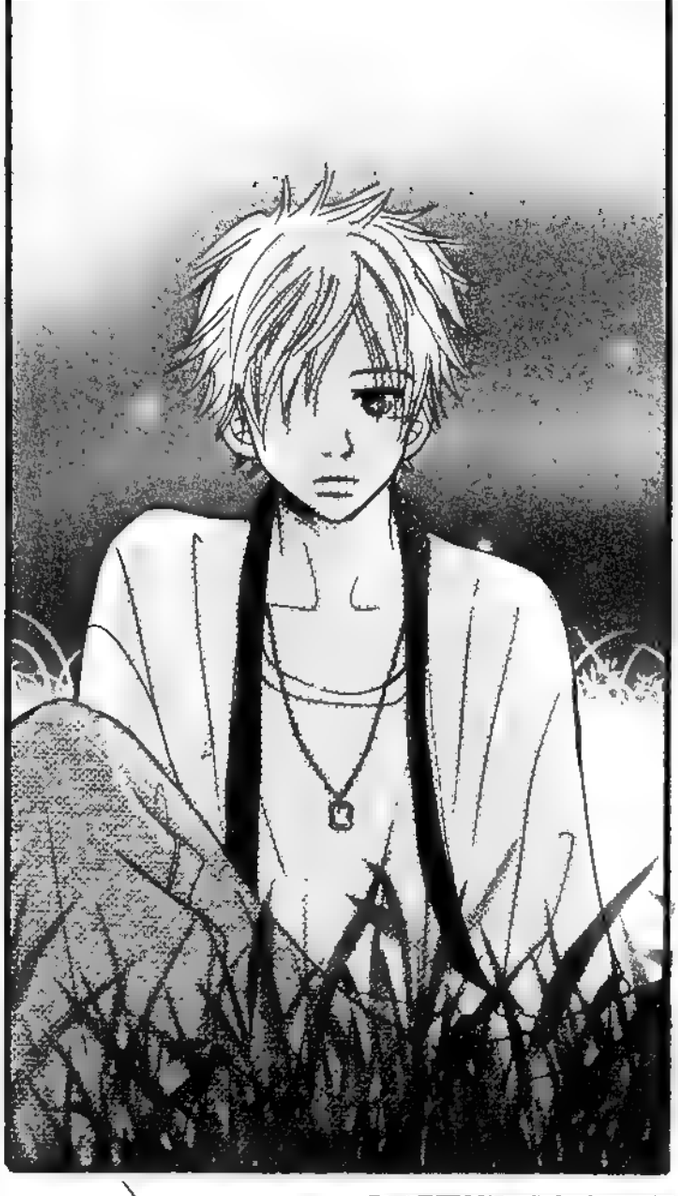
WILL
I BE
ABLE...

...TO BECOME A STRONGER PERSON?

THERE'S ONE CONDITION.

I HARDLY KNOW ANY-THING ABOUT HER.
ALL THIS TIME I'VE AVOIDED IT BECAUSE I WANTED TO BE NICE.
BUT IF I HEAR ABOUT HOW YOU REALLY FEEL ABOUT NANA-SAN ...
...AND COME TO TERMS WITH THAT...
...I THINK I MAY BE ABLE TO GET BACK TOGETHER WITH YOU.

I KNOW IT'S GOING TO BE TOUGH FOR YOU, YANO...
...BUT I THINK IT'S IMPOR-TANT.
I WANT YOU TO TELL ME...
...ABOUT YOUR TIME WITH NANA-SAN.
IF NOT, I DON'T THINK IT WILL WORK OUT BE-TWEEN US.



...
I DON'T...
...UNDERSTAND WHY THAT'S IMPORTANT...
THEN YOU'RE GOING TO KEEP RUNNING FROM IT?

CAN YOU DO THAT?

I GUESS YOU ARE.
AFTER ALL, YOU'VE BEEN DOING IT FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS.
IT'S TOO LATE FOR YOU TO FACE IT.
WHO SAID I COULDN'T FACE IT?
SO YOU'LL TALK ABOUT IT?
THEN ...

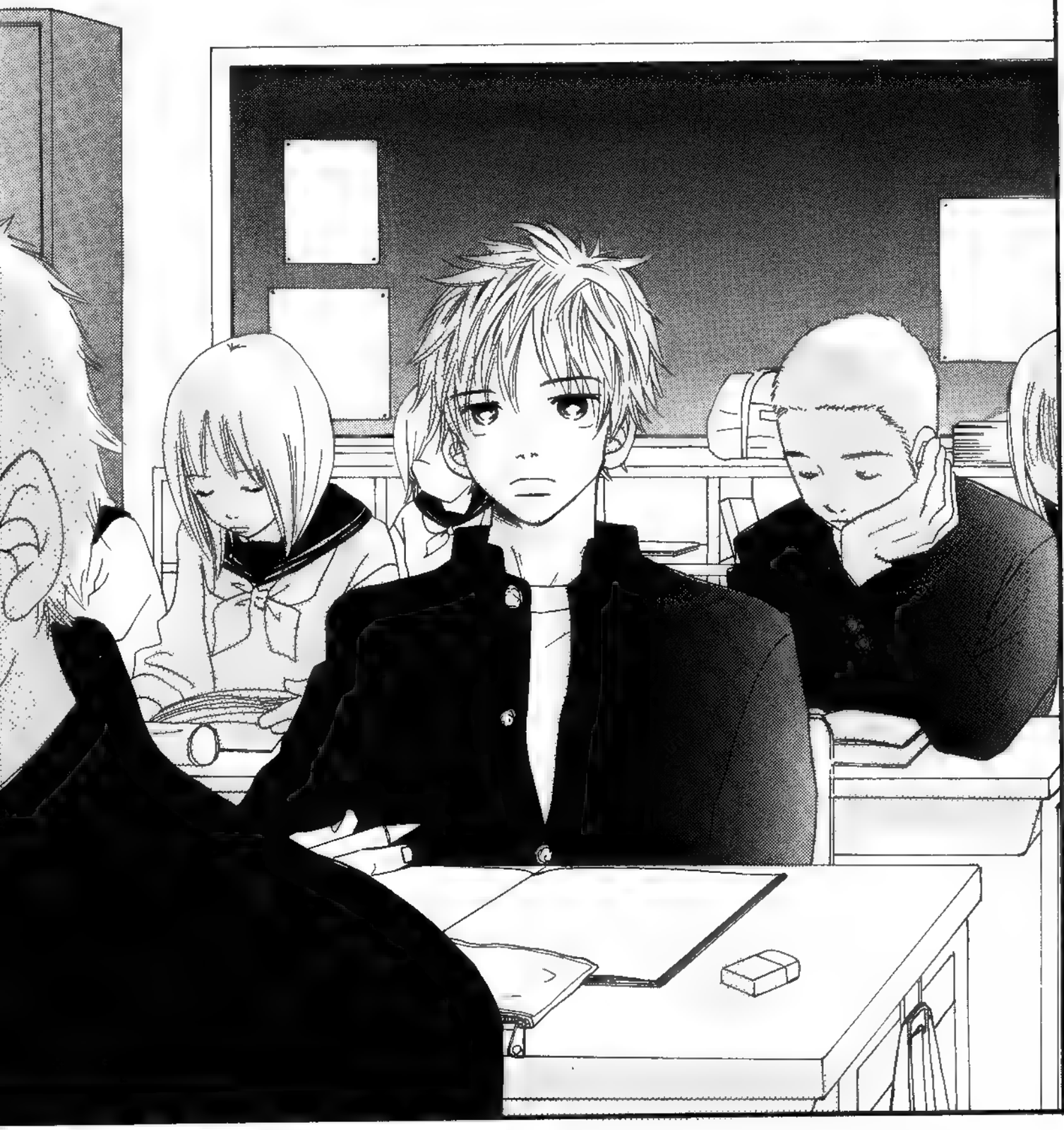
IF YOU SUCCEED...
...I'LL GIVE YOU A LITTLE GIFT.
DIDN'T YOU TELL ME YOU DELETED IT?!
DIDN'T YOU TELL ME YOU DIDN'T HAVE IT, NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I ASKED?!
WHO'S TOO SOFT NOW?
I LIED.

...TAKAHASHI IS SERIOUS, SO YOU NEED TO BE SERIOUS ABOUT IT TOO.
DON'T WORRY.
I JUST WANT TO SAY, THOUGH...
I WON'T INTERFERE OR ANYTHING.
IF YOU'RE JUST GOING TO PISS AROUND AGAIN...
...YOU DON'T DESERVE TAKAHASHI.

YOU'RE SUCH A LOSER!
SHUT UP!
...
YOU DIDN'T TELL HER AFTER ALL.
HOW COULD I?
HUH?
IT'S SO OBVIOUS HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT EACH OTHER.

...IT'S A PROBLEM WE'LL HAVE TO FACE SOONER OR LATER.
I WONDER IF HE REALLY WILL TALK ABOUT IT.
WELL, IF YANO AND I GET BACK TOGETH-ER..
ACTUALLY, I'M INTER-ESTED IN WHAT HE SAYS ABOUT IT TOO...
HE SAID HE WILL.
ME?
HUH?
UM ...
WILL YOU BE THERE WITH ME WHEN YANO TALKS ABOUT IT?
TO TELL THE TRUTH, I'M WORRIED...
WHY TIPTOE AROUND THE ISSUE?

I'M SUCH A NICE GUY, HUH.
WHAT?
HA HA HA
OR...
...ACTU-ALLY...
...I JUST DON'T KNOW WHEN TO GIVE UP.



Chapter 21

HEH
dmp
dmp
tik
12
6
tik
tik
12
6
tik
fidget
dong
dong
CLASS HASN'T ENDED YET.
YANO...
TAKA-HASHI...
LET'S GO HOME.
OOOH
ASTIR

2-7
HEY...
COME HERE.
blush
DUMPED AGAIN!
REJECTED!
UM...
I HAVE A COMMITTEE MEETING.
I DIDN'T SAY I'D START GOING OUT AGAIN WITH YOU.
I...
I KNOW THAT.
I THOUGHT YOU UNDERSTOOD.
...
!
BOTH!!
OKAY, I'LL MEET YOU IN FRONT OF THE STATION AT 11 ON SATURDAY.
WHICH IS BETTER?
SATURDAY OR SUNDAY?
ANYWAY...

...
THIS ISN'T A DATE, OKAY?
YEAH.
...SO HAPPY LIKE THAT...
..Yes!
SEEING HIM...
...MAKES IT EVEN HARDER ON ME.
Will it be okay?
...

YOU KNEW, RIGHT?
THIS WASN'T—
A DATE, I KNOW.
I GET IT.
YOU SURE YOU GET IT?
I SAID I GET IT.
YOU'RE SURE?
YOU CAN SEE IT...
"SHOCK" ...
...ALL OVER HIS FACE...
YOU THOUGHT ONCE YOU STARTED DATING AGAIN YOU COULD AVOID IT, DIDN'T YOU?
BULL'S EYE→
...
I MAY HAVE JUST CREATED ANOTHER PROBLEM FOR MYSELF.
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...
I WANT YOU TO TELL ME ABOUT NANA-SAN.
I'M WORRIED WHETHER THIS...
...WILL REALLY TURN OUT OKAY.

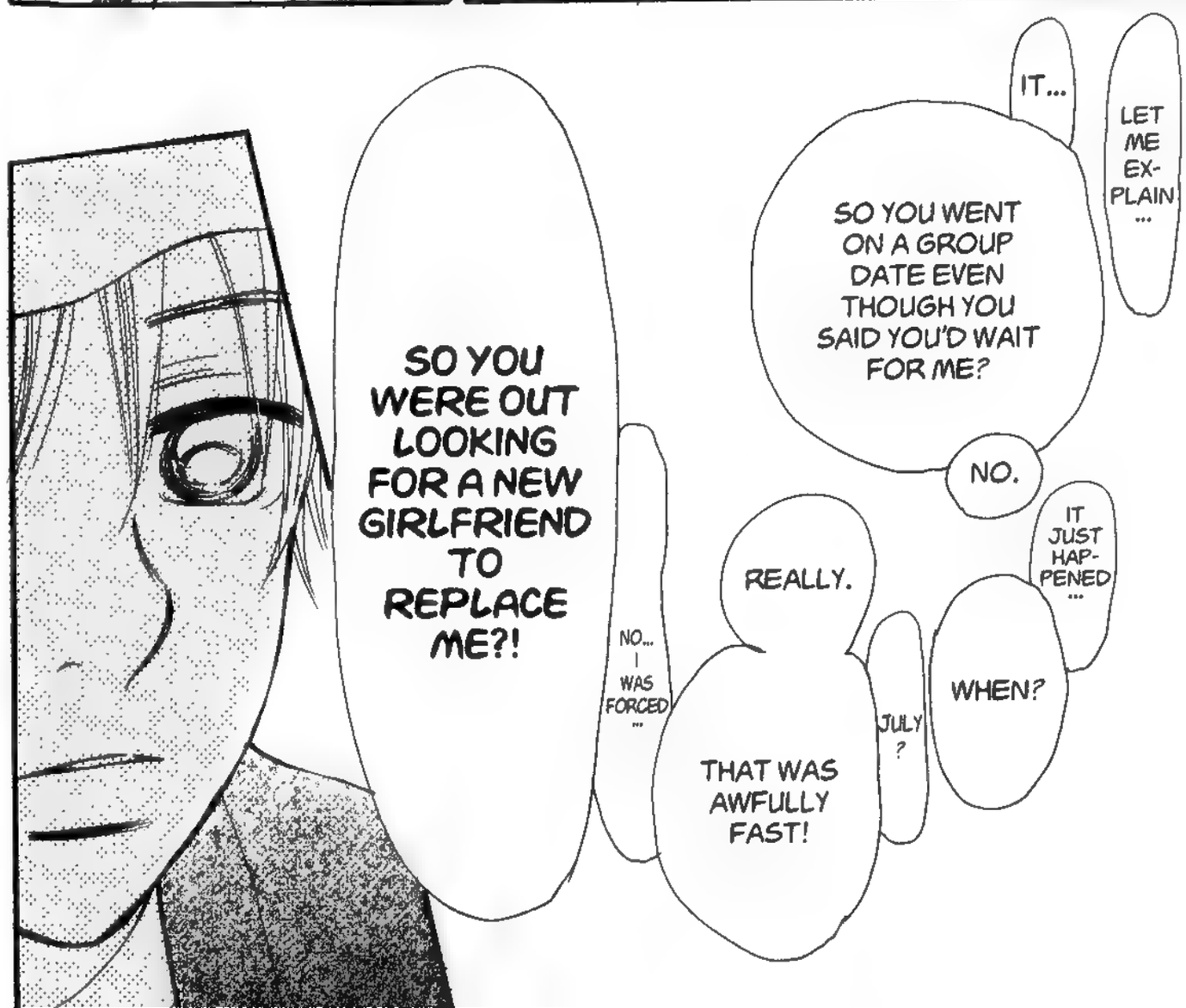
THERE'S REALLY...
MRMR
MRMR
...
...NOT THAT MUCH TO SAY ABOUT IT.
I MET HER IN THE WINTER DURING MY SECOND YEAR OF MIDDLE SCHOOL, AND SHE DIED IN THE SUMMER OF THE NEXT YEAR.
THAT'S THE STORY.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT CONCLUSIONS YOU CAN DRAW...
...FROM SUCH A SHORT TIME PERIOD.
HYPOTHETICALLY, IF IT WERE POSSIBLE...
...TO HAVE TAKAHASHI AND NANA-SAN DROWNING TOGETHER IN THE SEA...
...RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU...
HE'S BEING DIFFICULT.
WHAT I WANT...

EASIER TO GET AT THE ANSWER...
...TO GET AT THE ANSWER.
IT'D BE MUCH EASIER...
WE COULD THEN SEE WHO YOU'D SAVE FIRST.
...
VMP
Hey, it's buffet-style here.
WHY DON'T WE EAT FIRST?
ANY-WAY ...
IS THIS ALL...
HERE.
...HOW YANO FEELS ABOUT ME?
THANKS.
...JUST TO DETER-MINE...
WANT ONE?

HEH
I'VE LOST RESPECT FOR YOU.
I COULDN'T CARE LESS.
You know...
PSST
I NEVER THOUGHT YOU STILL HAD THAT PHOTO.
YES?
NOTHING.
YOU'RE WRONG...
ABOUT WHAT?
OH. YANO.
WHERE IS YANO?
HUH?
I sent it to you before.
THE YUKATA ONE.
TAKAHASHI.
DO YOU HAVE THE PHOTO YANO USES FOR WALLPAPER ON HIS PHONE?

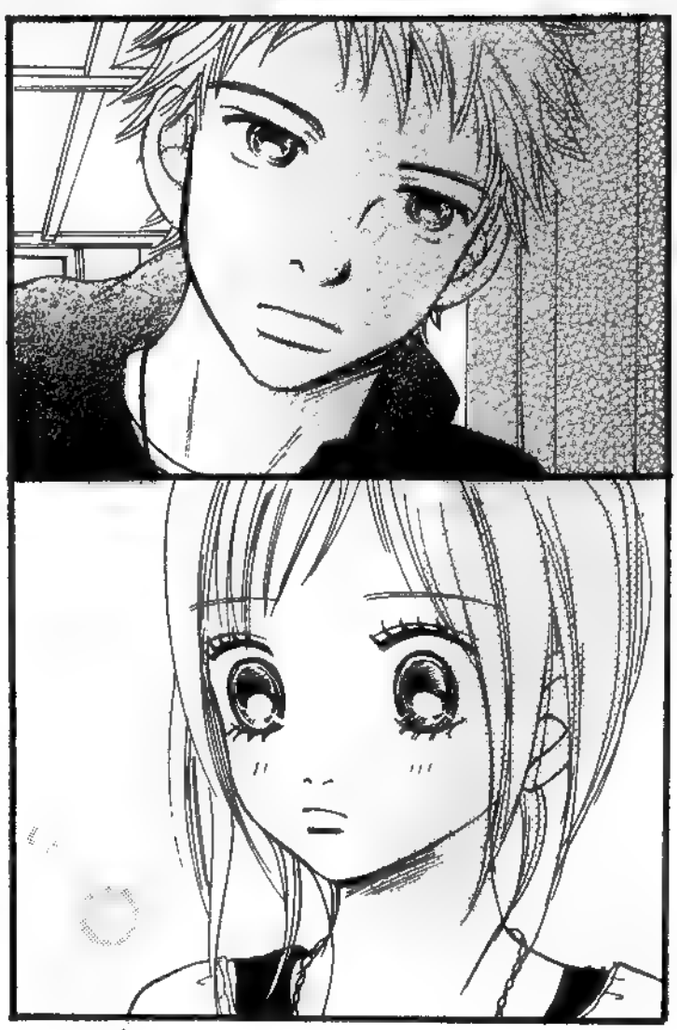
WHAT?
UM.
YEAH...
NEVER MIND.
SHH.
WHAT DO YOU NEED IT FOR?
YOU'LL SEE.
WHY DID YOU DELETE THE PHOTO?
krrk
ANY-WAY...
HUH?
I HAD NO IDEA HE WAS GOING TO USE IT...
GORIL-LA?
GO...
GODA TAKESHI ?
GO...
...FOR SOME-THING LIKE THAT.
YOU NEED TO BE SERIOUS ABOUT IT TOO.
Gokon = Group Date

GOKON?!
WE'RE EATING, YOU KNOW.
GO POOP?
GROUP—
I...
YOU SEE I...
UM.
I CAN'T BE-LIEVE YOU!
DUPE FATE?
YOU WENT ON A GROUP DATE.
I SEE.
SOUP'S LATE?
GROUP DATE, HUH.
LOVE COM?


SO YOU WERE OUT LOOKING FOR A NEW GIRLFRIEND TO REPLACE ME?!
NO... I WAS FORCED...
THAT WAS AWFULLY FAST!
REALLY.
JULY?
WHEN?
IT JUST HAP-PENED...
NO.
SO YOU WENT ON A GROUP DATE EVEN THOUGH YOU SAID YOU'D WAIT FOR ME?
IT...
LET ME EX-PLAIN...

...I WASN'T.
...
OF COURSE ...
OH!
YOU'RE THE ONLY GIRL...
...I'M INTERESTED IN.
...
tink
YANO STILL HAS HOLD...
...
...OF MY FEEL-INGS.

IT WASN'T SUP-POSED TO GO LIKE THIS.
I'M GOING TO HEAD HOME...
It doesn't seem like he's willing to talk about Nana-san today.
WHY DON'T YOU TRY HANGING OUT AND HAVING A NORMAL DATE FOR A WHILE?
HUH?
(YANO IS IN THE BATH-ROOM.)
BUT IF I FOLLOW MY EMO-TIONS...
...I'LL MESS UP.
MRMR
MRMR
WHY NOT BE A LITTLE MORE HONEST ABOUT HOW YOU REALLY FEEL?
YOU SAID THIS WAS ABOUT NANA-SAN, BUT...
...YOU WANT A REASON TO FORGIVE HIM.
MAYBE IT'S REALLY BE-CAUSE...
THAT'S WHAT I THINK.



IF YOU DON'T HAVE TRUST...

...NOTHING CAN SUCCEED.

SO IS THERE ANY-WHERE YOU WANT TO GO...
...NOW?
IT'S YOUR FAULT, YANO. YOU WOULDN'T OPEN UP TO US.
Yes!!
EH?
WHY DO YOU THINK WE CAME HERE TODAY?!
HUH?
WHERE'S TAKE?
HE WENT HOME.
DON'T BE SO UPTIGHT!!
YOU GUYS ARE UNBELIEV-ABLE...
WE CAME TO CHEER YOU UP.
You two had nothing better to do, huh.
WE'RE YOUR GOOD FRIENDS!!
COME ON, PARTY WITH US!
DON'T LOOK SO DEPRESSED, TAKE-CHAN.
WELCOME HOME!!

I SHOULDN'T GO OUT WITH A GIRL I'M NOT INTO, RIGHT?
THEN WHY AREN'T YOU GOING OUT WITH ONE?
REALLY?
REAL-LY.
YOU MIGHT AS WELL START GOING OUT WITH A GIRL AND THEN FALL IN LOVE WITH HER.
But you know what...
IF I COULD DO THAT, I WOULDN'T BE IN THIS SITUATION.
HM...
WHAT AN HONOR-ABLE GUY.
I HATE THAT ABOUT MYSELF.
CAN I TELL YOU GUYS SOME-THING?
gug
gug
TWO GIRLS IN SCHOOL THIS YEAR TOLD ME THEY HAVE A CRUSH ON ME.
D'YA KNOW... D'YA KNOW...
...I'D FORCE HER TO BE MINE.
IF I COULD...
...THEY'RE STILL IN LOVE WITH EACH OTHER.
EVEN AFTER EVERYTHING...
BUT...

"IN LOVE WITH EACH OTHER"...
THAT SOUNDS SO NICE.
I WANT THAT...
...
SO WHAT DO YOU THINK?
ABOUT THAT MARUMI TAKAHASHI.
MARUMI, HUH.
IT'S NANAMI.
IS SHE HOT?
I don't know!
SHE LOOKS NORMAL. IS THERE SOMETHING AMAZING ABOUT HER THAT WE DON'T KNOW?
THIS CHIBIMI TAKAHASHI.
CHIBIMI...
HER NAME IS NANAMI!
CHIBIMI, ISN'T IT?
WHAT'S THIS?
I WAS PISSED OFF, SO I WANTED TO TORMENT HIM SOME...
THIS IS FROM LAST YEAR'S SUMMER FESTIVAL.
SHE WAS DESPERATELY SEARCHING...
...FOR MOTO.

IF IT HAD BEEN ME, I'D NEVER LET HER SEARCH FOR ME.
I'D FIND TAKAHASHI BEFORE SHE HAD THE CHANCE TO LOOK...
TAKEUCHI-KUN!
TAKEUCHI-KUN!

I DON'T NEED THIS AFTER ALL.
Hmph.
WHY? YOU GUYS...
YOU BOTH TOOK HIS SIDE ANYWAY...!
bip
Delete this?
Y
N
!
IT MIGHT BE A LITTLE TOO EARLY TO GIVE UP, YOU KNOW?
...
WELL, YOU KNOW...
HMM.

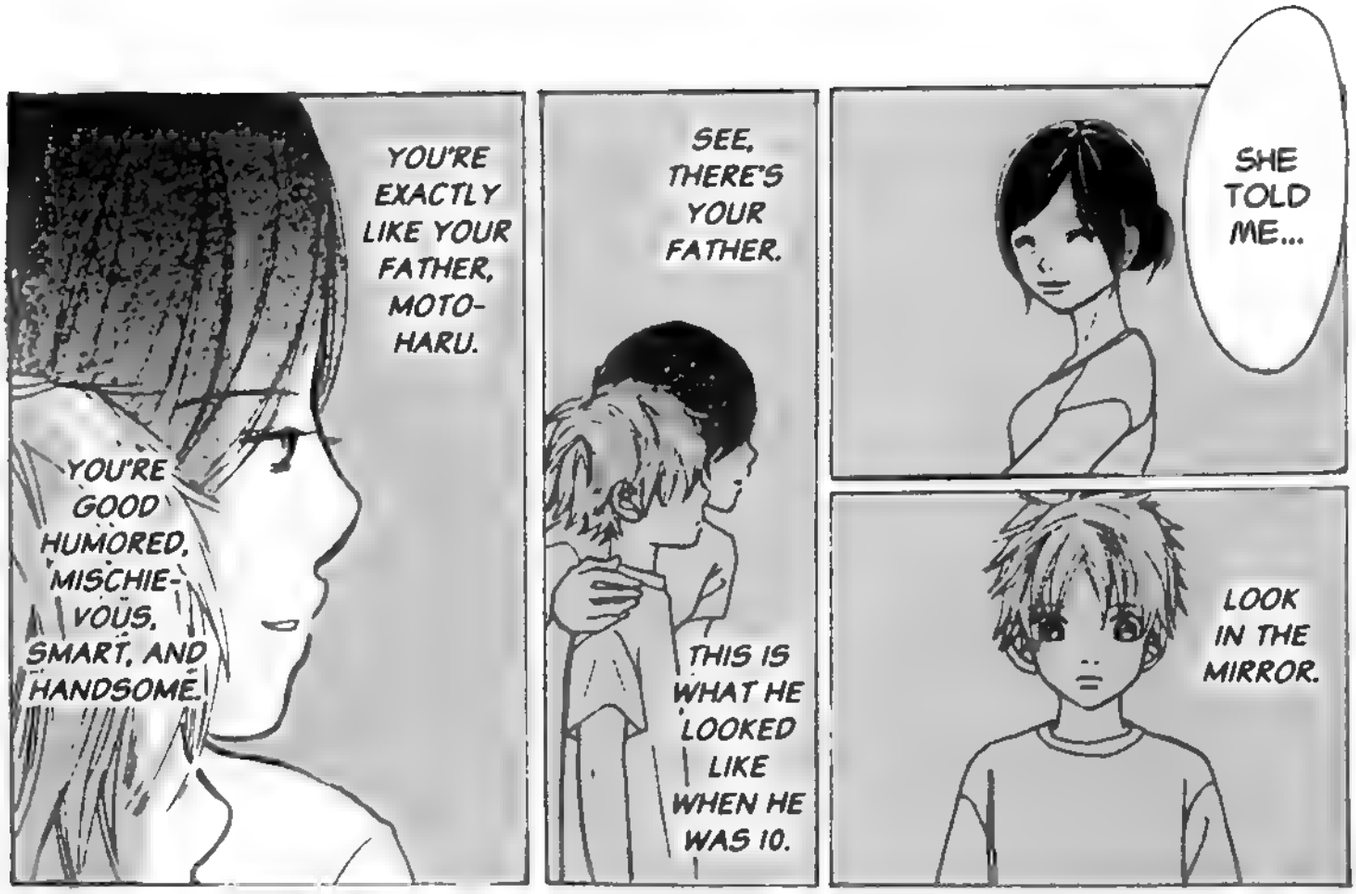
YOU MEAN HE'S THE TYPE WHO CAN'T DO ANYTHING WITHOUT A GIRL?
NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN.
HE'S NO GOOD UNLESS HE'S GOT A GIRL-FRIEND, RIGHT?
What the?!
WHAT FOR? WHO NEEDS THAT CRAP?
TO PRO-TECT?
PEOPLE DO THEIR BEST WHEN THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO PROTECT, RIGHT?
YEAH, BUT...
HE'S THE TYPE WHO NEEDS SOMEONE TO PROTECT.
THAT'S WHEN HIS MOM GOT REMAR-RIED?
FIRST YEAR, RIGHT?
OF MIDDLE SCHOOL.
IT HAD TO HAVE BEEN HARD BACK THEN...
I DON'T KNOW IF HE REALIZES IT...
NOT REMARRIED.
...BUT THAT GUY BASICALLY DOESN'T TRUST WOMEN.

HIS CURRENT FATHER...
...IS THE FIRST TIME HIS MOM GOT MARRIED...
...I THINK.
...A DATE.
...IS JUST...
MIND IF I CHANGE?
I'LL WAIT HERE.
WELL...
IT'S FINE.
TODAY...
OH WELL...
I CAME TO YANO'S HOUSE.
...JUST FOR TODAY.
BUT...
YOU SURE?

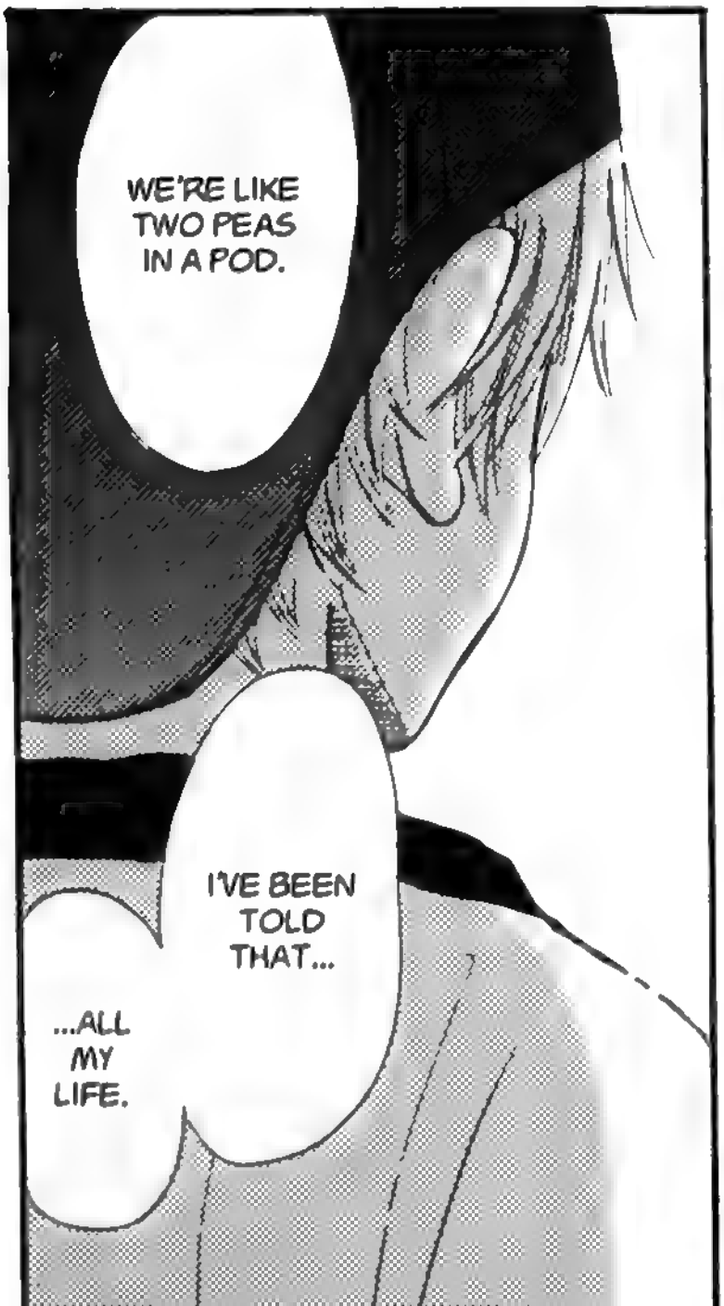
Hello there.
I DON'T KNOW.
OOH...
IT'S ONE THAT WAS ABANDONED IN FRONT OF TAKE'S HOUSE.
A CROSS-BREED, I GUESS.
WHAT KIND OF DOG IS IT?
TA-DAH!
WHAT?!
I can't believe it!
YOU GOT A DOG?!
WHAT?!
shock
More like fat!!
IT'S HUGE.
EH?!
IS IT REALLY THE SAME PUPPY?!
That puppy?
PUPPIES GROW, YOU KNOW!
HE GOT TO ME WITH THE DOG. (I'VE BEEN HAD.)
I'M SO STUPID.
AAH.
WHAT'S ITS NAME?
...
WALKING CLOTHES
LA...
LA?
LALA...
LALA?
THAT'S A CUTE NAME.
so she's a girl.

YANO...
YOU MIGHT ACTUALLY END UP BEING A DOTING FATHER...
Slmp
UH?
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
NO... IT'S CUTE, THAT'S ALL.
UNTIL NOW, I DIDN'T SEE YOU AS WANTING TO BE THE TYPICAL FAMILY-MAN KIND OF GUY.
MY DREAM IS TO HAVE A WARM FAMILY WITH THREE KIDS, A LARGE DOG, AND A GARDEN WITH A BASKETBALL HOOP.
THREE KIDS, HUH...
I ONLY WANT TO HAVE ONE.
HUH?!
NO WAY!
IF IT'S ONLY ONE, THE KID WON'T HAVE ANYBODY TO PLAY WITH!!
You've got to have more.
THEN TWO KIDS AT MOST. A GIRL AND A BOY.
BUT YOU NEED TWO BOYS AT LEAST.
WHAT'S IT TO YOU?
IT'S NOT LIKE I'M GOING TO MARRY YOU.
OH...
I WAS MEAN TO HIM AGAIN.
BUT TWO BOYS...
...WILL HAVE SOMEONE TO PLAY CATCH WITH EVEN WHEN THE FATHER ISN'T THERE.

...HIS FATHER.
"HE WAS AN ATHLETE."
"A SWIM-MER..."
...FOR THE FIRST TIME. HE'S TALKING ABOUT...
YANO IS TELLING ME THIS...
I'VE NEVER HAD THE EXPERIENCE OF DOING SOMETHING WITH MY FATHER...
...YOU SEE.
...WHAT THE FATHER I HAD NEVER SEEN LOOKED LIKE.
I HEARD THIS OVER AND OVER AGAIN...
...AND TRIED TO IMAG-INE...
"...WHO BROKE THE RECORD AT A NATIONAL TOURNAMENT WHEN HE WAS A STUDENT."
THE ONLY MEMORIES I HAVE OF MY FATHER ARE WHAT MY MOM TOLD ME.
"HE DIED RIGHT AFTER YOU WERE BORN."
"HE DIED OF LEUKEMIA."
...IF THERE WAS A PHOTO OF DAD.
I WANTED TO KNOW WHAT HE LOOKED LIKE.
WOOF
WOOF
WHEN I WAS IN FOURTH GRADE, I ASKED MY MOM...


SHE TOLD ME...
LOOK IN THE MIRROR.
SEE, THERE'S YOUR FATHER.
THIS IS WHAT HE LOOKED LIKE WHEN HE WAS 10.
YOU'RE EXACTLY LIKE YOUR FATHER, MOTO-HARU.
YOU'RE GOOD HUMORED, MISCHIE-VOUS, SMART, AND HANDSOME.

EVERY YEAR, YOU GROW...
...MORE AND MORE LIKE HIM.


WE'RE LIKE TWO PEAS IN A POD.
I'VE BEEN TOLD THAT...
...ALL MY LIFE.

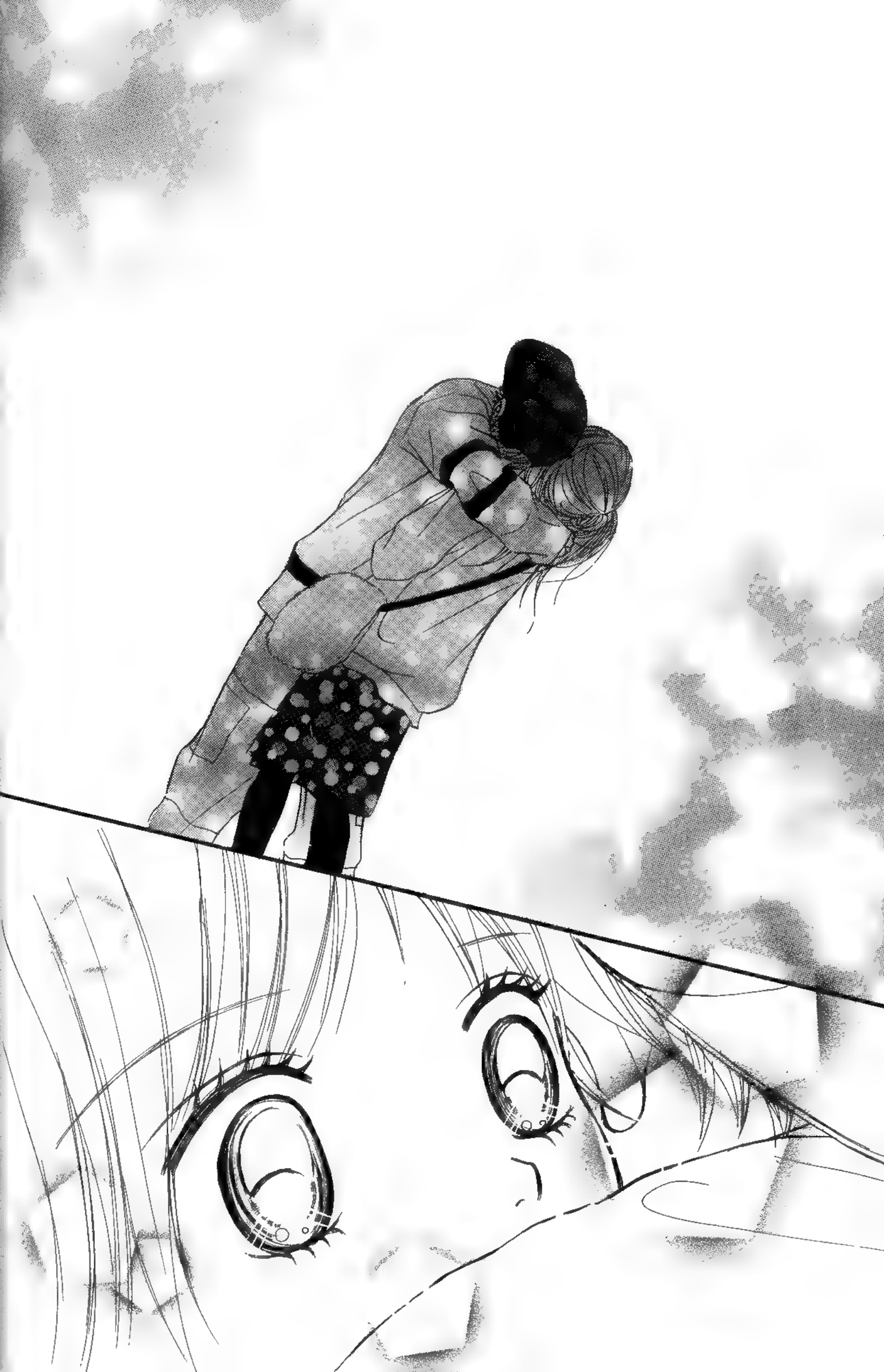
FWEE
REALLY?
DID HE LOOK LIKE YOU?
So she had a photo of him?
I COULDN'T REALLY TELL.
HUH?
I SAW HIM.
It means you'll look like him when you grow up, right?
I WISH I COULD HAVE MET HIM.
OOH... I WANT TO SEE!!
REALLY?
DASH
SHE'S GOT A NAMEPLATE WITH HIS PHONE NUMBER.
Ador-able.
LALAMI
OH.
YOU BROUGHT IT TO ME.
HEY!
WOOF
WOOF
THANK YOU!
GOOD GIRL!

MY CHEST HURTS.

...I'LL PROBABLY GIVE IN.
IF I STAY WITH HIM ANY LONGER...
OKAY... I'LL SEE YOU TO THE BUS STOP.
I'M GOING HOME.
HUH?
THERE'S NO REASON FOR ME TO STAY ANY LONGER.
WE CAN'T...
...HOLD HANDS?
WHAT?
OF COURSE NOT.
...
THEN ...
KISSING IS OUT OF THE QUESTION...
... TOO?
DAMN RIGHT.
BUS

THEN...
CAN WE...
...SHAKE HANDS?
IT'S LIKE I'M...

...LEADING HIM ON.
BECAUSE I DON'T...
...TRUST HIM.
I EVADE HIS QUES-TIONS...
I'M MEAN TO HIM...
...LIKE I'M DANGLING A CARROT IN FRONT OF HIM...



THANK YOU...
...FOR TODAY.

...FLOW IN AND OUT OF MY HEAD.
THE WORDS...
...OF VARIOUS PEOPLE...
THERE IS NOTHING...
...TO DEBATE. NOT INSIDE MY HEART.

IT WILL TAKE WILL-POWER...
...TO TRUST HIM.
BUT...
...ARE TWO DIFFER-ENT THINGS.
BUT MY EMOTIONS AND MY WILL...
ONLY MY FEELINGS KNOW...
...WHAT I REALLY WANT TO DO.

YANO.
...CONTRA-
DICTING
MYSELF.
I'M...

klink
You came home at the right time.
AH. MOTO-HARU.
COULD YOU MOVE A FLOWER-POT FOR ME?
THE ONE THAT HAD THE WHITE FLOWERS IN SUMMER.
FE... ...FELI?
THE FELICITE PARMEN-TIER.
THAT ONE.
NEXT TO THE CON-STANCE SPRY.
sway
HEAVY!
THE CON... THE CON WHAT?!
WH-WHERE DO I PUT IT?!
THUD
※ NAMES OF ROSES

I'M...
I'M GETTING ITCHY.
IT'LL BE LIKE A DREAM, HUH?
YOU DON'T TALK TO ME LIKE YOU USED TO.
NICE, ISN'T IT?
WHEN DID YOU GET THIS ARCH?
...
COME SPRING IT'LL BE COVERED IN PINK ROSES.
...YOU WERE REALLY TALK-ATIVE...
WHEN YOU WERE IN ELEMEN-TARY SCHOOL...
EVERY DAY AFTER YOU CAME BACK FROM SCHOOL, YOU'D TELL ME...
...WHAT HAD HAP-PENED THAT DAY...
IT'S MY FAULT, ISN'T IT?

CHAK

SWAA
MY FATHER IS A SWIMMER, AND HE WON THE NATIONALS IN HIGH SCHOOL.
SO I'M GOING TO BE A SWIMMER LIKE MY DAD.
BUT YOU'RE AN ILLEGITI-MATE CHILD.
"illegiti-mate"?
WHAT'S AN ILLEGITI-MATE CHILD?
AHHH!
YANO-KUN GOT INTO ANOTHER FIGHT AGAIN.
SOOSH
OKAY.
LET'S SEE...
SPLSH
HMM.
YOUR TIME ISN'T IMPROV-ING.
...
SWIMMING JUNIOR TOURNAMENT PRELIMINA ROU
MRMR
MRMR
HEY...

IT WAS YOUR BEST TIME EVER.
DON'T BE DE-PRESSED.
YOU DID REALLY WELL.
I'M COMING IN.
WHY DO YOU ALWAYS STARE IN THE MIRROR BEFORE A RACE?
TO CONCEN-TRATE.
IS IT FOR LUCK OR SOME-THING?
KNOK
KNOK
MOTO-HARU.
MOTO-HARU?
...
I COULDN'T GET FIRST PLACE...
I'M PROUD OF YOU!!
OF COURSE NOT!!
VUMP
AREN'T YOU DISAP-POINTED IN ME?
YOU GOT SECOND PLACE.
THAT IS OUT-STANDING TOO.

KA-CHAK
MOTO-HARU.
WE'RE GOING TO THE HOSPI-TAL.
HURRY UP AND GET READY.
GO HOME, YOU GUYS.
WHAT? WHAT?
What hap-pened?
UM... IT'S PROB-ABLY THE GUY WE WENT TO VISIT THE OTHER DAY.
MY MOM'S FRIEND'S HUSBAND HAS CANCER.
CHAK
IS HE GOING TO DIE?
HE'S BEEN IN THE HOSPITAL FOR HALF A YEAR, SO...
HEY, CLEAN UP BEFORE YOU GO.
WOW.
I'VE NEVER SEEN A DEAD BODY BEFORE.
HA HA HA HA
THAT'S MEAN.
I'VE ONLY SEEN HIM TWICE BEFORE, YOU KNOW.
Lucky! I want to see him too.
HE LOOKS LIKE A SKELETON. IT GIVES ME THE CREEPS...
BUT YOU MUST LOOK AT HIM.
UGH...
TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT HIM...
... MOTO-HARU.
HE'S...
...YOUR FATHER.

YOU'RE MY SON.
THEN AM I MICHIKO-SAN'S SON?
HE'S YOUR FRIEND'S HUS-BAND, RIGHT?
...A FATHER, DON'T YOU THINK?
...SO YOU NEED TO HAVE...
YOU'RE GROWING UP TOO...
THERE'S SOMEONE I WANT TO MARRY.
MOTOHARU.

CHAK

WHY...
ANYONE I WANT NEAR ME WILL LEAVE...
...AND WHAT I DON'T WANT KEEPS REPEATING ITSELF.
...DO THE THINGS I REALLY WANT JUST PASS ME BY?

Text Message
Takahashi, next time I promise to talk about Nana. So please see me again.
ALWAYS, MY EXPECTATIONS ARE NEVER MET...
...AND MY LUCK NEVER LASTS...
MY LIFE NEVER GOES AS I WANT IT TO.
BUT...
Re:
Okay. Nanami
...IF GOOD LUCK CAN TURN TO MISFORTUNE...
...THEN THERE MUST BE A WAY TO REVERSE IT BACK.

...TO CONTINUE LIVING.
I MUST BELIEVE THAT...

Nanami's School Life
YOU WANT TO KNOW A GOOD WAY TO DIET?
FOR EVERY TWO POUNDS YOU LOSE, I'LL GIVE YOU A PASSIONATE KISS...
MWA
...
HMPH
If you're going to be like that...

Continued on page 110...

Chapter 22

Nanami's School Life

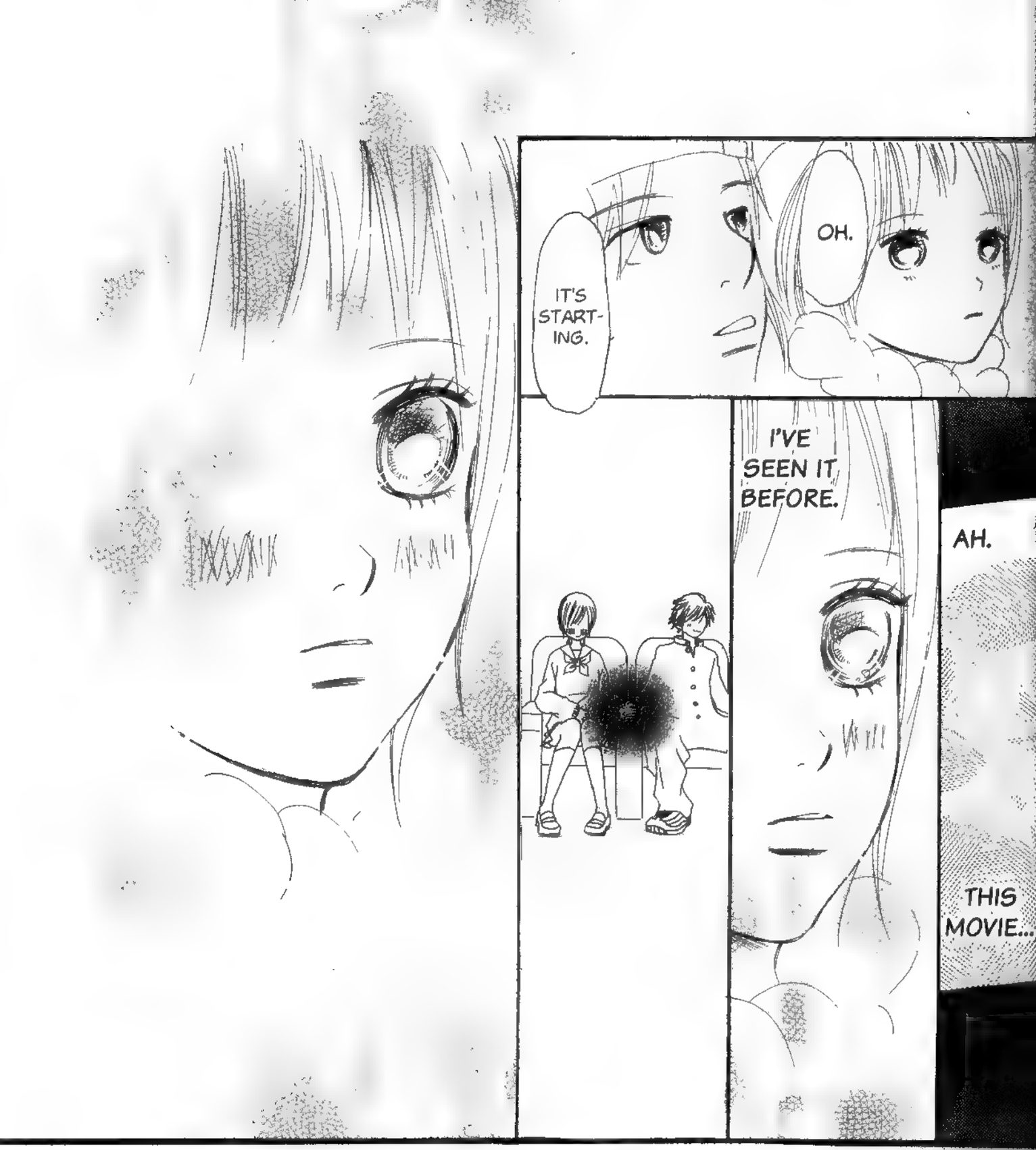
Fin

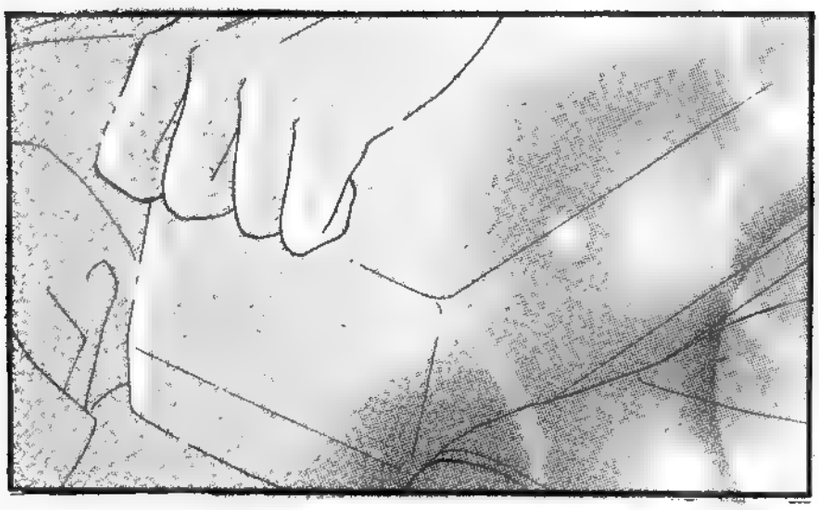
A MOVIE?!
IT'S A FREE PASS FOR TWO, AND TODAY'S THE LAST DAY.
BUT WE DON'T HAVE TO—
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
I KNOW.
BUT...
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO SAY THIS ISN'T A DATE—
WHAT A WASTE!
EH?!
IT'S THE LAST DAY?!
THRIFTY

OH NO...
HEY...
GREAT.
THERE'S ONLY THREE OTHER PEOPLE HERE
THAT'S GREAT.
UH...
NOT AGAIN...
IT'S EMPTY.
I'VE BEEN DUPED AGAIN...
...IT'S OVER BETWEEN US.
IF YOU DON'T REALLY TALK TODAY...
LET ME SAY THIS NOW.

YANO...
...EVADES ANY TALK ABOUT NANA-SAN.
YEAH.
IT'S STRANGE.
I KNOW.
I DON'T SEE YOU MAKING ANY EFFORT TO TALK ABOUT IT...
...
SHE LAUGHED A LOT. SHE LAUGHED AT ANYTHING. SHE LAUGHED ABOUT THINGS THAT WEREN'T EVEN FUNNY.
CHARACTERISTIC: STUPID.
FAVORITE COLOR: PINK.
HER ROOM WAS ALL PINK TOO.
DISLIKES: STUDYING.
LIKES: KARAOKE.
FAMILY: PARENTS AND A YOUNGER SISTER.
NANA YAMAMOTO. BIRTHDAY: JULY 29. BLOOD TYPE: B.
OKAY.

SHE WENT OUT WITH WHO KNOWS HOW MANY GUYS.
I WAS HER SEVENTH BOYFRIEND BY THE WAY.
REMEMBER?
LIKE HOW SHE COUGHED OUT UDON FROM HER NOSE?
FROM HER NOSE?!
HOW YANO FEELS ABOUT HER AND...
THINGS YOU REMEMBER FROM GOING OUT WITH NANA-SAN...
UM.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
I DIDN'T WANT HER PROFILE.
HUH?
I MEANT... YOU KNOW?
HEY...
THIS ISN'T WHAT I MEANT.
HUH?
SHE BURST OUT LAUGHING ONCE WHEN WE WERE EATING NOODLES.
Typical.
YEAH...
STUPID, WASN'T SHE?
IT SCARED ME.
AND IT CAME OUT?!
Well that's a bit...





AND OF COURSE...

...HE'S KEEPING...

BUT WE'RE NOT...
...HALF OF THE ARMREST FREE.
...HOLDING HANDS LIKE BACK THEN...
WHY?
"I WANT YOU TO BE ALIVE AND HERE WITH ME."
YOU SAID THAT TO NANA-SAN.
REMEM-BER?

YES...
IF NANA-SAN HAD MADE IT THROUGH THE ACCIDENT...
IF SHE WERE ALIVE...
WOULD YOU STILL BE GOING OUT WITH HER?
THAT QUES-TION...
...WAS UNFAIR.
...
SORRY...
I...
THAT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE, DON'T YOU THINK?
HOW COULD I KEEP ON GOING OUT WITH HER?
REALLY?

I WANT YOU TO BE ALIVE AND HERE WITH ME.
YOU DIDN'T MEAN IT?
IT WAS IN THE HEAT OF THE MO-MENT.
YOU REALLY FEEL THAT WAY THOUGH, RIGHT?
NO, I DON'T.
ANY-WAY...
I DIDN'T MEAN IT...
...WHEN I SAID THAT.
YANO, YOU WON'T TRULY ANSWER MY QUESTIONS, WILL YOU?
VMP
JUST FORGET IT.
...
I AM AN-SWERING THEM.
I'M NOT RUN-NING AWAY.
WHY DO YOU KEEP RUNNING AWAY?
YOU ARE!

...I FEEL NANA-SAN'S EXISTENCE THERE.
AND THE MORE YANO DENIES IT...
YANO HAS AN IMPENETRABLE WALL INSIDE HIM...
...THE MORE...
I DON'T UNDERSTAND YANO'S FEELINGS ANYMORE.
SHP
EVERY TIME I SLAM INTO IT, I GET ANNOYED.
AH!

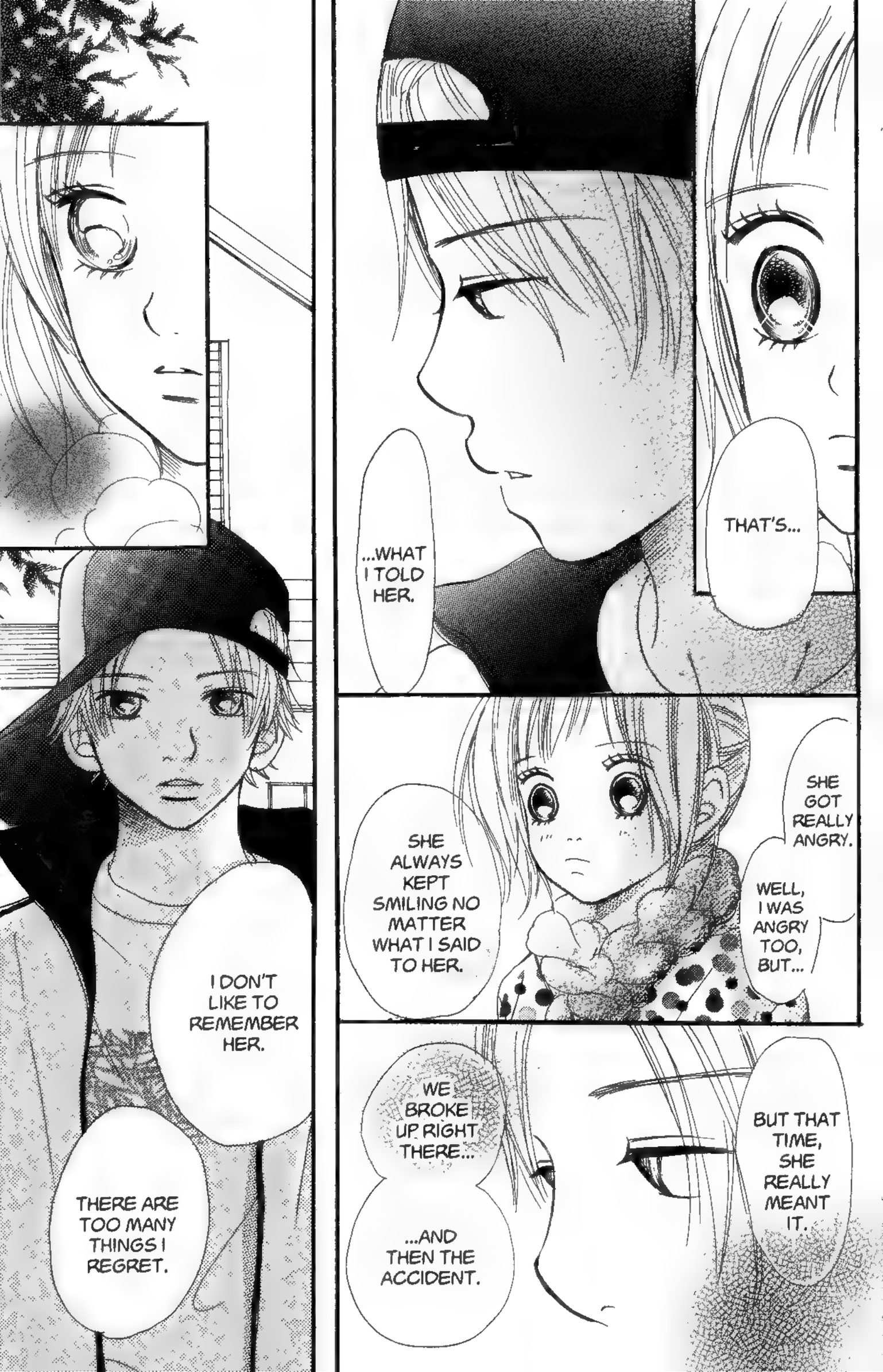
krnk

I DON'T HAVE ANY CONFIDENCE LEFT...
THEN...
IT'S GAME OVER. I COULDN'T PASS THE TEST.
YOU MEAN...
LET'S END THIS. THERE'S NO POINT ANY-MORE.

...BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT I CAN DO ANYMORE.
I THOUGHT I COULD DO SOMETHING FOR YANO, BUT...
I DIDN'T WANT THIS...

BYE.
...I GUESS I WAS JUST FOOLING MYSELF.
THE DAY BEFORE SHE DIED.
WE HAD A FIGHT.
IT WAS OVER SOMETHING REALLY STUPID ...
IT WAS JUST AN ORDINARY FIGHT COUPLES HAVE.

I WAS WITH MY FRIEND MIKI AND TWO GUYS HIT ON US.
HUH?
COL-LEGE STU-DENTS.
OH...
THAT PLACE.
I WENT THERE JUST THE OTHER DAY.
THAT PASTA PLACE THAT OPENED LAST MONTH!!
HUH?
WHAT, WHAT?
IT'S A DAY EARLY, BUT LET'S CEL-EBRATE YOUR BIRTHDAY TODAY.
YOU WANTED TO GO, RIGHT?
YOU CAN HAVE ALL THE THINGS YOU WANT TODAY.
OH!
WHY DO YOU LET YOUR-SELF GET PICKED UP?
of course.
BUT ALL I DID WAS JUST EAT AND TALK TO THEM.
EH...
BUT...
I'VE BEEN REALLY BORED. YOU'VE BEEN BUSY SINCE SUMMER BREAK STARTED, MO-CHAN.
You didn't call me, and you're not home when I call...
I TOLD YOU I'M DOING PART TIME WORK AT TAKE'S PLACE, DIDN'T I?!
HUH? I DIDN'T KNOW THAT.
You never told me.
I TOLD YOUR SISTER WHEN SHE ANSWERED THE PHONE.
Oh, when?
DON'T HOOK UP WITH OTHER GUYS JUST BECAUSE THEY'LL PAY FOR MEALS!
YOU ARE SUCH A STUPID BITCH!


THAT'S...
...WHAT I TOLD HER.
SHE GOT REALLY ANGRY.
WELL, I WAS ANGRY TOO, BUT...
SHE ALWAYS KEPT SMILING NO MATTER WHAT I SAID TO HER.
BUT THAT TIME, SHE REALLY MEANT IT.
WE BROKE UP RIGHT THERE...
...AND THEN THE ACCIDENT.
I DON'T LIKE TO REMEMBER HER.
THERE ARE TOO MANY THINGS I REGRET.

I HATE MYSELF FOR IT.
I SEE HOW POWER-LESS I AM.
I START ASKING MYSELF FUTILE QUESTIONS.
FUTILE QUES-TIONS?

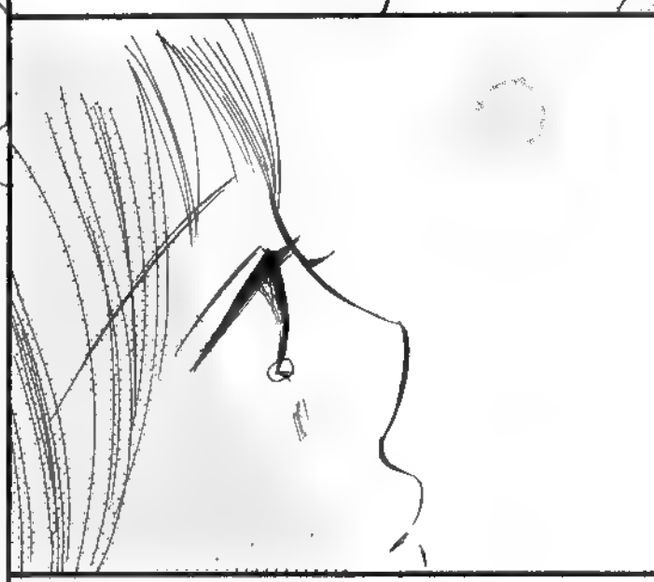
WHAT QUESTIONS?
I BELIEVE WE MEET...
...THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN OUR LIFE ONE AT A TIME.
TAKA-HASHI.
YOU MAY NOT BELIEVE ME...
...BUT THERE'S NO ONE MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN YOU.

BUT NONE OF THAT MATTERS IF YOU CAN'T TRUST ME.
THE GIRLS I WANT THE MOST ALWAYS LEAVE ME.
BYE.

PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME.
JUST HOW HAVE I ABANDONED YOU?
THE GIRLS I WANT THE MOST ALWAYS LEAVE ME.
MY GIRLFRIEND WAS A BITCH.
FUTILE QUESTIONS.
YANO.
THE QUES-TIONS...
...YANO ASKS HIM-SELF ARE...

YANO!
NANA-SAN...
SHE REALLY DID LOVE YOU, YANO, I'M SURE OF IT.

I'M SURE SHE REGRETS WHAT HAPPENED.
SHE PROBABLY REALLY REGRETS LEAVING YOU HERE, YANO.
SHE'S REGRETTING IT TO DEATH THAT SHE MADE YOU SO SAD.
AND...
...SHE'S PROBABLY...
...WATCHING OVER YOU FROM HEAVEN, YANO.



AH.

AND THIS TIME...

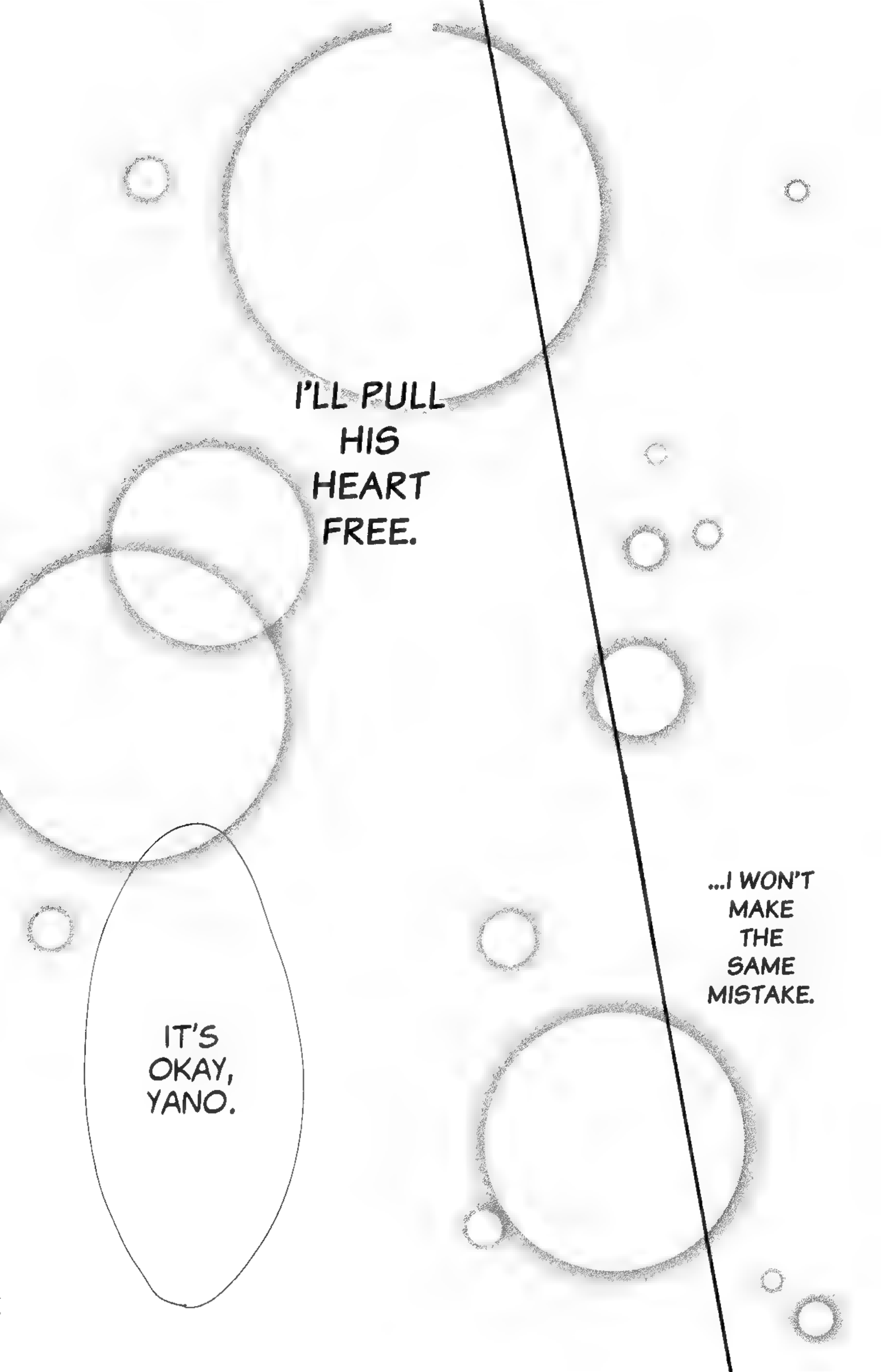
THAT DAY...

...HE WAS LETTING ME IN.

YANO IS OPENING HIS HEART TO ME.

I SEE.

I UNDER-STAND NOW.

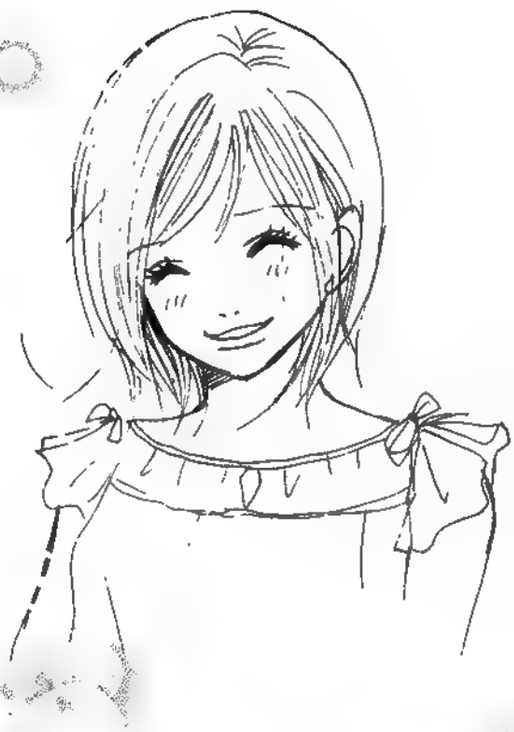

I'LL PULL HIS HEART FREE.
...I WON'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE.
IT'S OKAY, YANO.

SHE NEVER ABANDONED YOU.
NANA-SAN DIDN'T MEAN TO LEAVE YOU.
YOU TWO JUST PASSED EACH OTHER WITHOUT KNOWING, THAT'S ALL.
SHE REALLY LOVED YOU, YANO...
...SHE JUST DIDN'T HAVE THE CHANCE TO TELL YOU.
YANO.
TALK TO ME.
I'M SURE NANA-SAN IS LISTENING RIGHT NOW.
I BET SHE'D SAY IT WAS HER MISTAKE.

TELL...
...NANA-SAN.
THEN...
YOU WANT TO LOOK FOR HAPPINESS TOGETHER?

I'M SO SORRY...
I COULDN'T MAKE YOU HAPPY.

HE JUST TOOK...



...THE FIRST STEP.

I WILL CHERISH IT...

YOU PASS.
...AND FACE THE FUTURE.
YANO...
I'LL FOCUS ON THE FUTURE.

Chapter 23

...BE
FINE.
WE'LL...

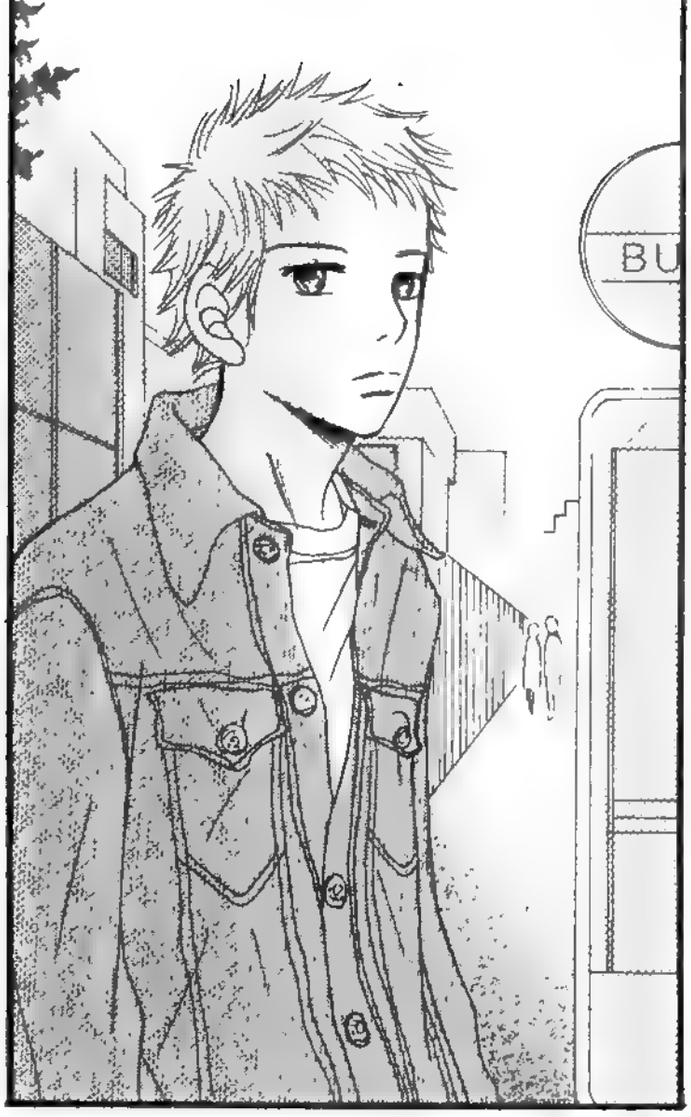
YOU SURE IT'LL BE OKAY?
EHHHHH?
YOU'RE BACK TOGETHER WITH HIM?
UH-HUH.
HA HA HA

NOW THAT I'VE DECIDED TO START OVER...
I'M STICKING WITH IT.
BUT...
YOU DIDN'T LET YOURSELF GET SWEPT AWAY, DID YOU?
DON'T "UH-HUH" ME!
ARE YOU SURE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT IT?!
SEE!
YOU LET YOURSELF GET SWEPT AWAY!!
WELL...
I COULDN'T LEAVE HIM.
MAYBE.
MAYBE?
NANAMI...
...
HMM...
OKAY.
IF YOU'RE THAT DETER-MINED...
...WE'LL BOTH...
... SUPPORT YOU.
HEY!
HUH?
THEY MADE UP?
NOT BAD.
HEH

HEY...
YOU FREE TOMOR-ROW?
WHAT FOR?
GO-KON.
WHO WITH?
F GIRLS HIGH.
ANY-ONE WANT TO GO?
No guys yet.
...
AH... TAKE?
FORGET HIM.
He won't go.
I'LL GO!
HUH?!
YEAH.
SERI-OUSLY?
WHAT'S WITH THE CHANGE OF HEART?

OKAY.
I'LL CALL YOU WHEN I LEAVE MY HOUSE.
YEAH.
THEN I'LL MEET YOU TOMORROW AT THE USUAL PLACE?
BUT IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE YANO CAME TO MY HOUSE...
!
I'LL ASK MOM TO GET US CAKES TO EAT.
A RETURN TO PEACEFUL DAYS.
...AS IF NOTHING HAPPENED.
WE'RE BACK TO OUR USUAL EVERYDAY LIFE...
PRECIOUS...
...IRRE-PLACEABLE DAYS.

I WANT TO BELIEVE IN HIM MORE...
...EACH DAY.
CHAK
WHAT?
IS SOME-THING WRONG?
OH. NO. IT CAN WAIT.
ARE YOU GOING OUT?
YEAH.
WHEN WILL YOU BE BACK?
LATE.
?
HAVE FUN.
BUS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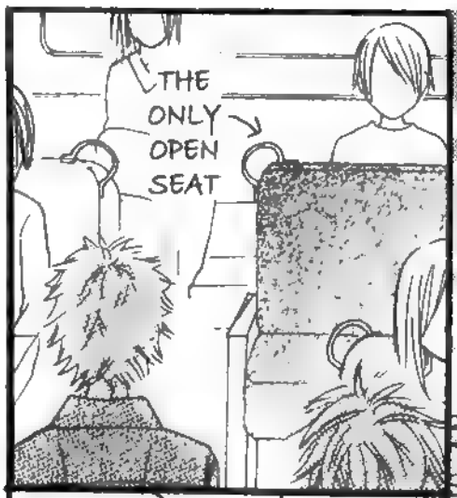
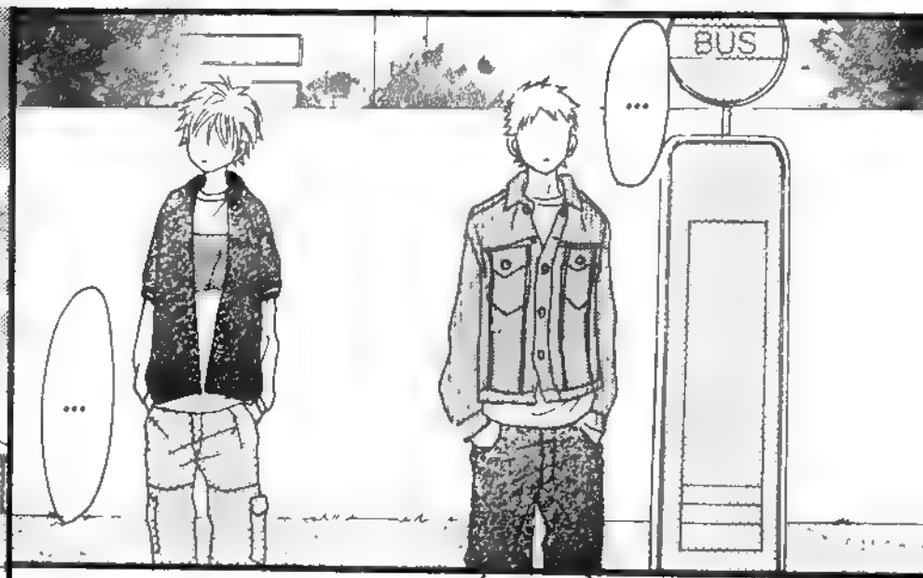
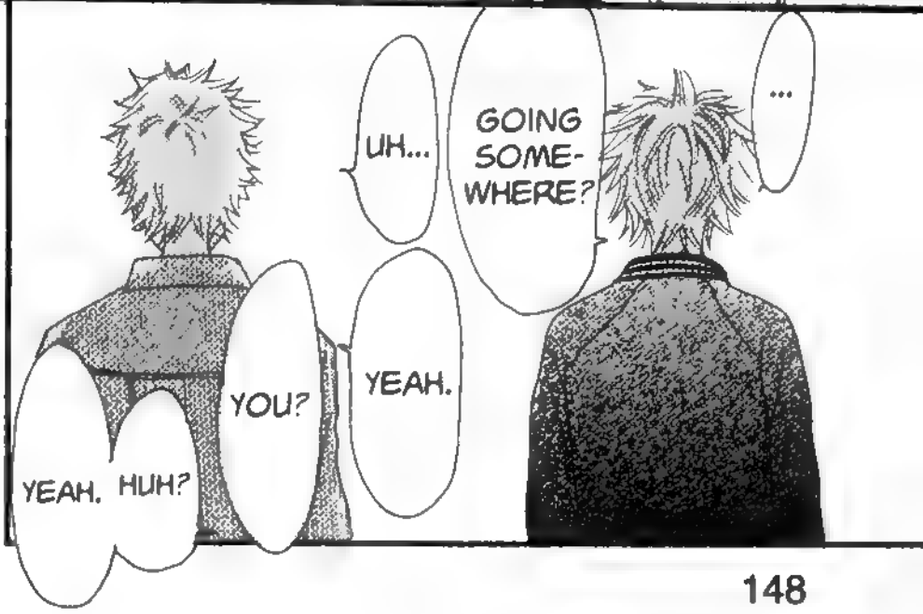
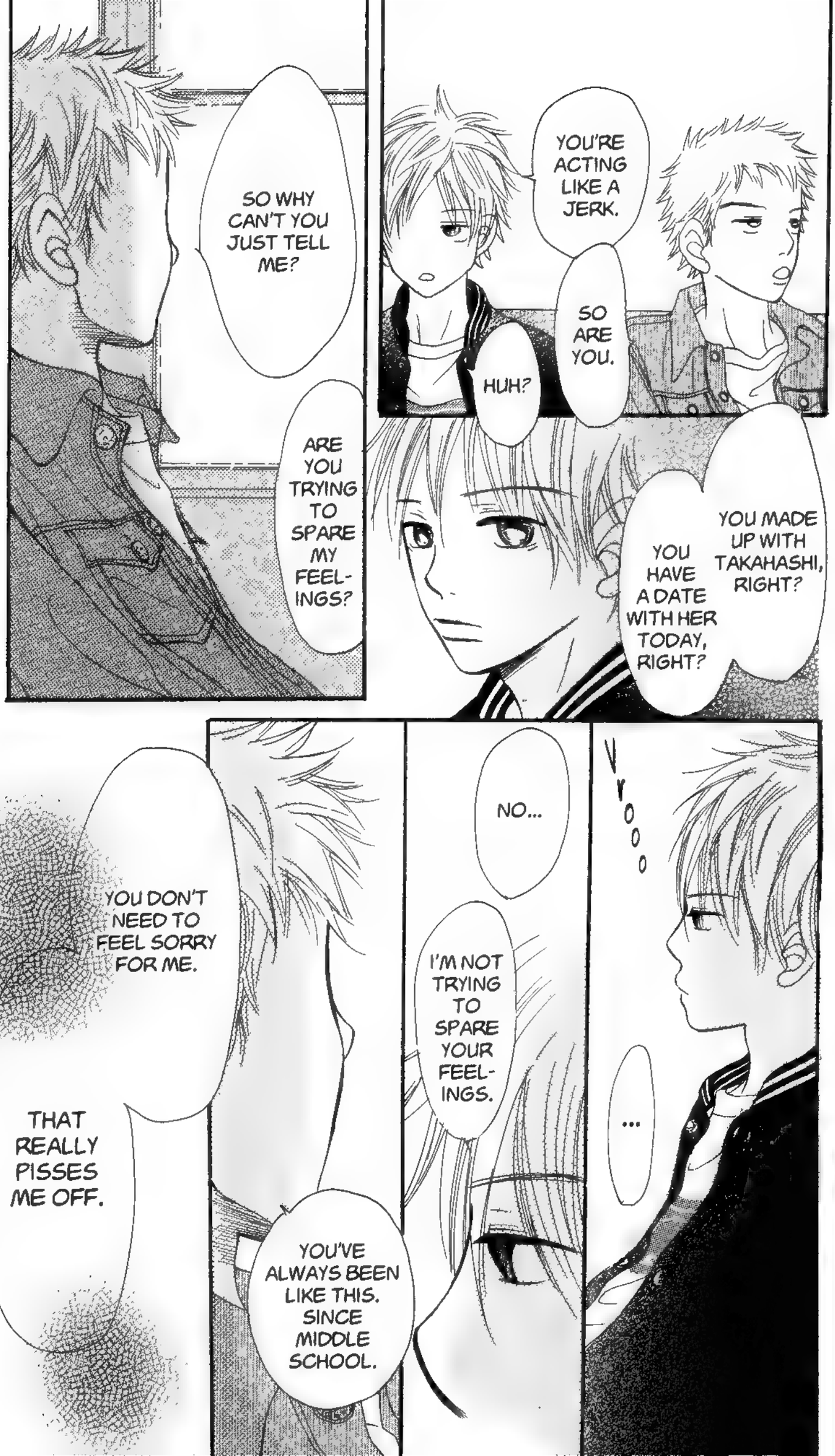

THE ONLY OPEN SEAT

Vroo


BUS
...
...

DON'T SIT NEXT TO ME!
THEN WHY DON'T YOU STAND ?!
IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING SOME-WHERE TOGETHER!


...
GOING SOME-WHERE?
UH...
YEAH.
YOU?
YEAH. HUH?


YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A JERK.
SO ARE YOU.
HUH?
YOU MADE UP WITH TAKAHASHI, RIGHT?
YOU HAVE A DATE WITH HER TODAY, RIGHT?
SO WHY CAN'T YOU JUST TELL ME?
ARE YOU TRYING TO SPARE MY FEEL-INGS?
NO...
I'M NOT TRYING TO SPARE YOUR FEEL-INGS.
YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THIS. SINCE MIDDLE SCHOOL.
YOU DON'T NEED TO FEEL SORRY FOR ME.
THAT REALLY PISSES ME OFF.
...

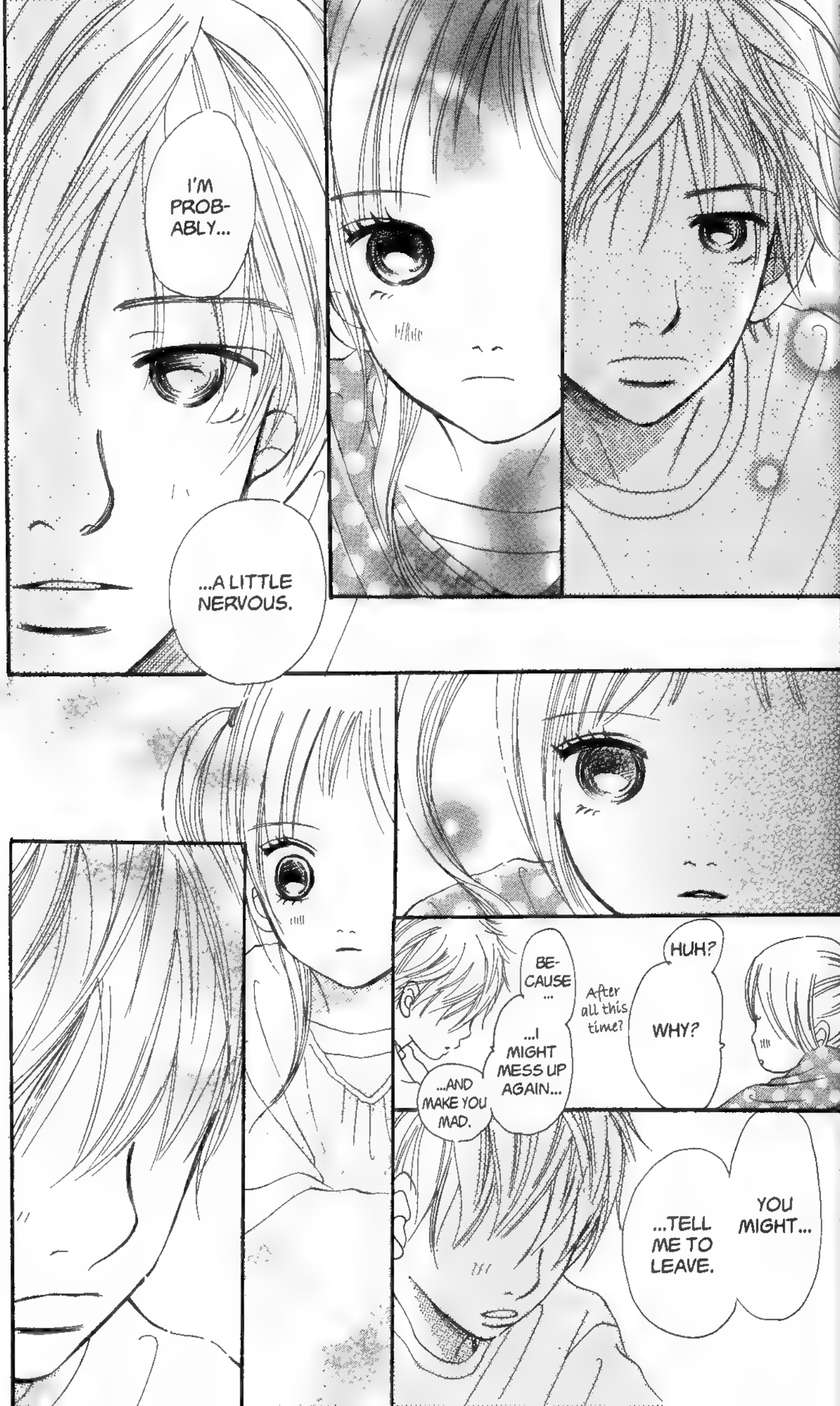
YOU TOLD ME THAT I'D REGRET IT...
YOU DECLARED WAR AGAINST ME...
I WAS THAT DESPERATE.
...AND SET A TRAP WHEN I GOT THE CHANCE.
THAT'S WHY I TIED YOU UP WITH A ROPE...
BACK THEN YOU THRUST ME DOWN INTO HELL!
...YOU'RE THE ONE WHO BACKED DOWN, NOT ME!
THIS TIME...

BUT THEN YOU DECIDE TO GIVE UP IN THE MIDDLE?
COULDN'T YOU FIGHT IT OUT TO THE END?
WHY THE HELL DO I...
...HAVE TO SPARE THE FEELINGS OF A GUY LIKE THAT?
THAT'S STUPID.
...
...
...
I'M REALLY NOT TRYING TO SPARE YOUR FEELINGS, OKAY?!
...
Vroo

This is a surprise...
TAKEUCHI-KUN.
OH.
YOU CAME ALONG?
NO, I...
I'M CHANGING BUSSES.
Woosh
OH.
HUH?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
GOKON.
EH... NEVER MIND.
AS I SAID, I'M NOT TRYING TO SPARE YOUR FEELINGS, OKAY?
DAMN IT, HE KNEW.
Information travels fast, you know.
GOOD LUCK AT THE GOKON.
... THANKS.
TAKE-UCHI IS BUSY WITH HIS GOKON.
HEY.
LET'S GO, TAKA-HASHI.
A GOKON.
A GROUP DATE, RIGHT?

YOU WERE MEAN TO HIM, YANO.
THAT WAS WEIRD.
HUH?
BUT HE WAS MEAN TO ME FIRST, YOU KNOW?
SLUMPED SHOULDERS
...
...
YANO...
...YOU LOVE TAKEUCHI-KUN, DON'T YOU?
URGH
HUH?!
How did you jump to that conclusion?!
BUT IT'S TRUE.
You're embarrassed...
THAT'S SICK! SHUT UP, FOOL!
LET'S CHECK OUR ANSWERS AFTER WE DO QUESTIONS 3 AND 4.
OKAY.

DO YOU WANT SOME-THING TO DRINK?
NO. I'M FINE.
...
YANO, YOU'RE SO DILIGENT TODAY.
HUH?
USUALLY YOU PLAY AROUND SO MUCH THAT WE DON'T GET ANY WORK DONE.
REALLY?
UH-HUH.
WHAT HAP-PENED?
IT'S WEIRD.
EH?
YOU WANT ME TO TALK OR SOME-THING?
NO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO.


I'M PROB-ABLY...
...A LITTLE NERVOUS.
HUH?
WHY?
After all this time?
BE-CAUSE ...
...I MIGHT MESS UP AGAIN...
...AND MAKE YOU MAD.
YOU MIGHT...
...TELL ME TO LEAVE.

I WON'T SAY...
...
...THAT.
I'VE MADE UP MY MIND TO START OVER, OKAY?
...
It's awk-ward when you're so quiet.
JUST...
...FOOL AROUND LIKE YOU ALWAYS DO.
BUT...
...WHEN I SAID HE PASSED...
MAYBE...
...I WAS IMPUL-SIVE...

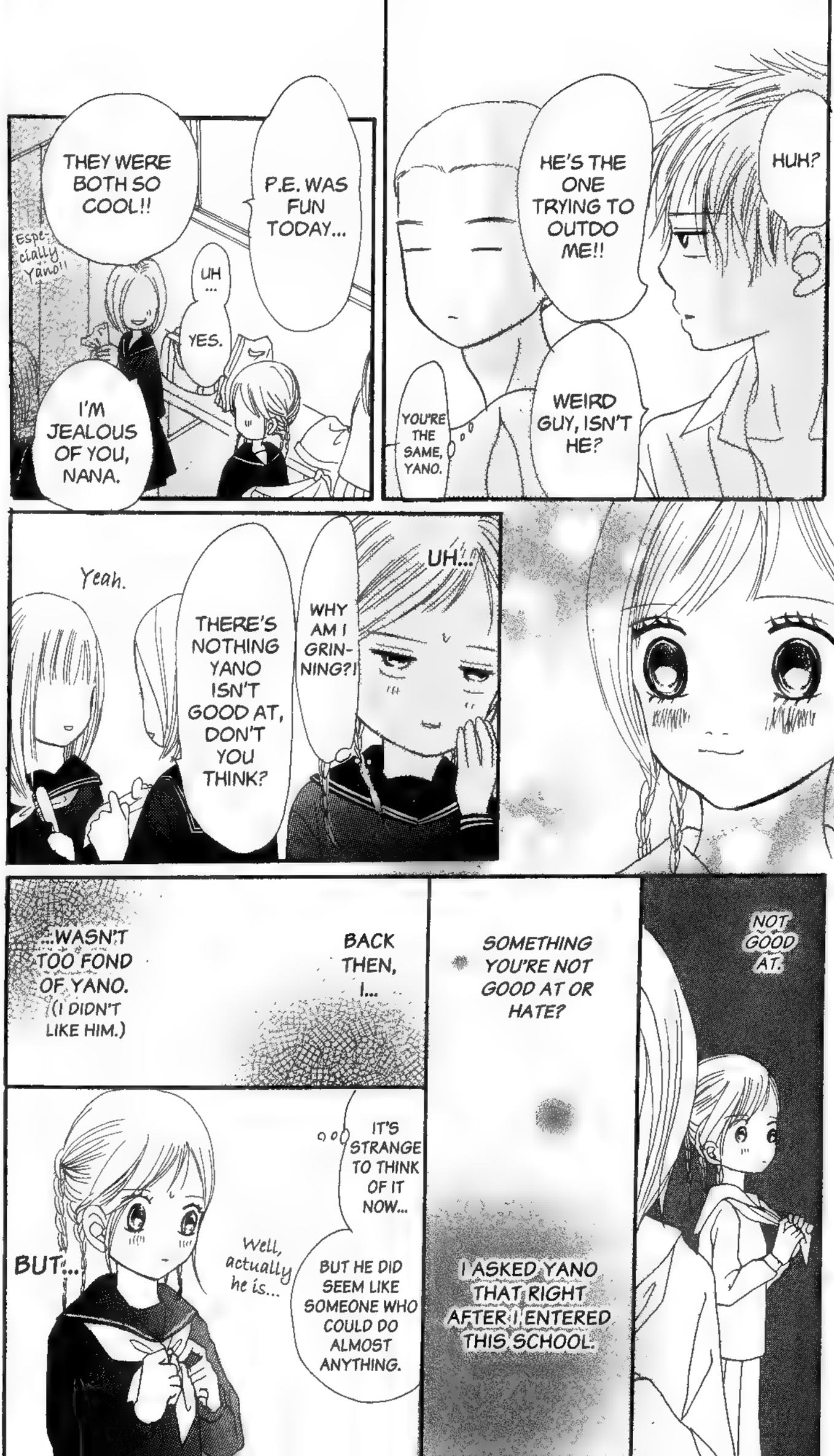
LET'S START THE INTRODUCTIONS.
INTRODUCE YOURSELVES!
um, my name is Emiko...
I like to...
...THAT IMPULSE WAS WHAT...
...I'D BEEN WAITING FOR ALL THIS TIME.
I JUST REALIZED IT NOW.
Done!!
You're fast!
Krrk
AH...
EXCUSE ME
Bathroom
STRAIGHT AHEAD ON THE LEFT
HA
HA
HA

Eek!
HE JUST DID A SOMER-SAULT...
KUMAZO (P.E. TEACH-ER).
REALLY ?
SCARY.
Anyone who can do a flip...
...can try!
KUMAZO'S P.E. CLASS IS ALWAYS SO RECK-LESS.
JUMP
YOU UP FOR IT?
NO WAY!
Not me.
AREN'T YOU STARV-ING?
I'M SAVING MY STRENGTH.
HEY, ALL THE GIRLS ARE WATCHING.
HE'S GOT NOTHING BUT A'S IN P.E.
CHAL-LENGER NO. 1!!
YANO.
....

Good luck!
Ah!
HE ALWAYS GETS SO FIRED UP WHEN PEOPLE ARE WATCHING...
DMP
Woooo
wow...
PIECE OF CAKE.
klap
klap
klap
ARE THERE ANY MORE CHALLENGERS?!
BEAUTIFUL FLIP!
THAT WAS GREAT.
He sure stands out, huh.
THAT MADE THE GIRLS HAPPY.
HA HA

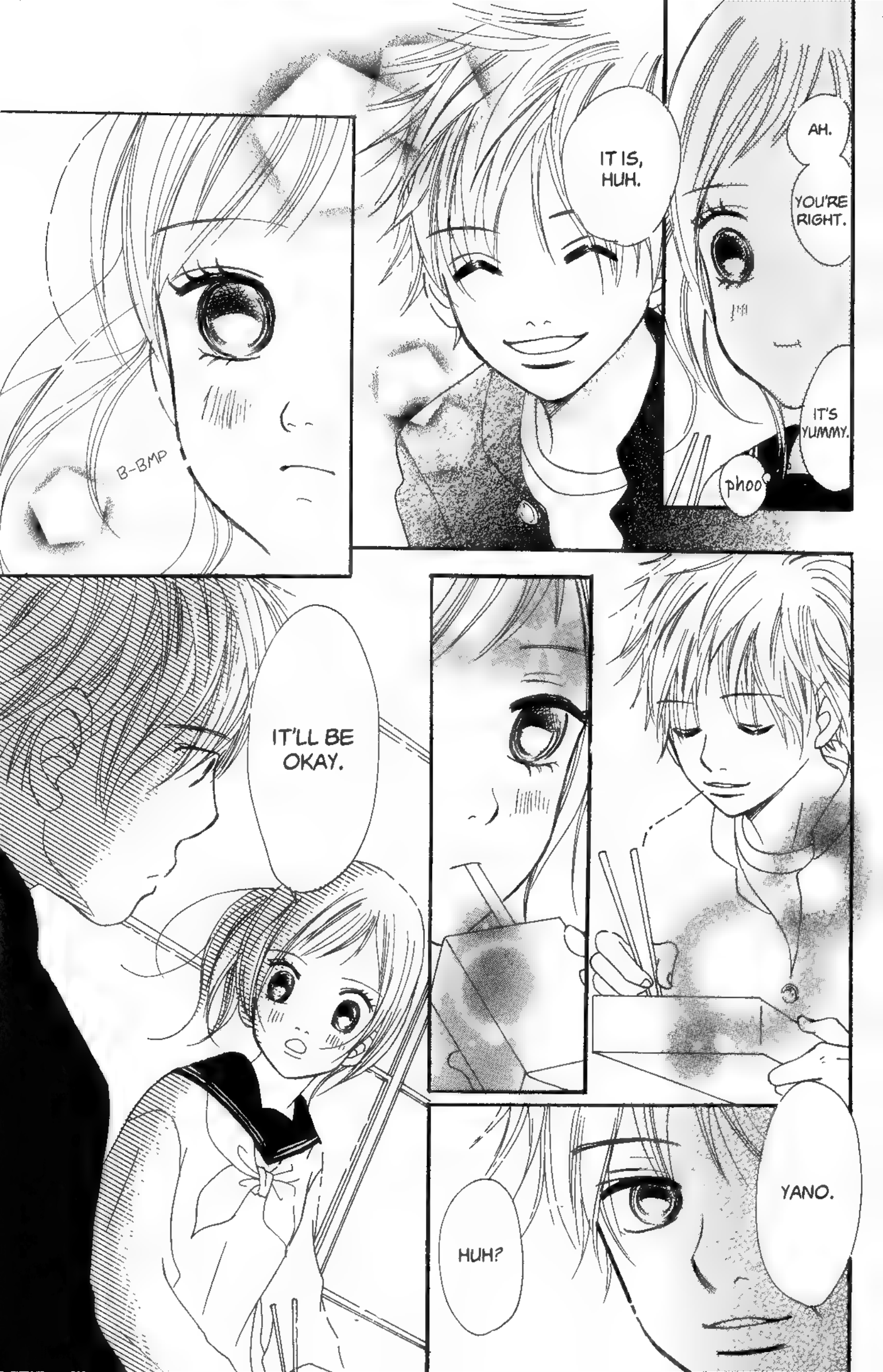
TAKE, AREN'T YOU GOING TO TRY?
I DON'T CARE...
That was amazing, huh!
NAH ... TOO MUCH EF-FORT.
HA HA HA, I GUESS SO. IT'D SUCK IF YOU DIDN'T MAKE IT.
JUST TAKE IT EASY.
← PROVOKING
OH...
...
IT'S NOT LIKE HIM TO DO THIS KIND OF THING, HUH.
IT'S TAKEUCHI-KUN.
CHAL-LENGER NO. 2!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
TAKEUCHI IS GOING FOR IT!

THEY WENT TOO FAR, SO THE TEACHER STOPPED THEM.


THEY WERE BOTH SO COOL!!
Especially Yano!!
P.E. WAS FUN TODAY...
UH...
YES.
I'M JEALOUS OF YOU, NANA.
HUH?
HE'S THE ONE TRYING TO OUTDO ME!!
YOU'RE THE SAME, YANO.
WEIRD GUY, ISN'T HE?
Yeah.
THERE'S NOTHING YANO ISN'T GOOD AT, DON'T YOU THINK?
WHY AM I GRIN-NING?!
UH...
...WASN'T TOO FOND OF YANO. (I DIDN'T LIKE HIM.)
BACK THEN, I...
SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT GOOD AT OR HATE?
NOT GOOD AT.
BUT...
Well, actually he is...
IT'S STRANGE TO THINK OF IT NOW...
BUT HE DID SEEM LIKE SOMEONE WHO COULD DO ALMOST ANYTHING.
I ASKED YANO THAT RIGHT AFTER I ENTERED THIS SCHOOL.

LOVE.
WHAT YANO ISN'T GOOD AT.
NOW...
...I KNOW...
IT'S THE SAME FOR YANO, WHO CAN JUMP OVER THE VAULTING BOX SO EASILY.
WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT LIKE THAT...
AFTER SOMETHING HAS MADE YOU VULNERABLE...
...YOU TEND TO SHY AWAY FROM IT.

...IT MAKES YANO EVEN MORE DEAR TO ME.
HEY, I'VE BEEN MEANING TO SAY THIS...
YOUR BENTO ALWAYS LOOKS SO NICE.
She uses leftovers from dinner.
COULD I TRY SOME?
IT'S NOTHING LIKE THE BENTO MY MOM MAKES.
UH-HUH.
YOU THINK SO?
NO.
IT'S...
...NOT AS GOOD AS IT LOOKS.
Don't say that!
COME ON.
WHY?!
HIS MOM'S COOKING...
CHMP
...
SEE?
IT'S NOT VERY GOOD, IS IT?
...
...
HOW DO I PUT IT?
IT'S VERY NORMAL COMPARED TO HOW IT LOOKS.
HM.
It's not that it tastes bad.
SHE'S NEVER BEEN A GREAT COOK.
BUT AT LEAST SHE TRIES, SO YOU'VE GOT TO CUT HER SOME SLACK.
HM...
REALLY?
It's the only good thing.
BUT THE EGG IS ACTUALLY PRETTY GOOD.
TRY IT.
Gimme...


AH.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
IT'S YUMMY.
phoo
IT IS, HUH.
B-BMP
IT'LL BE OKAY.
YANO.
HUH?

I WANT TO BELIEVE THAT TOO.
WHAT YOU SAID...
"WE MEET THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN OUR LIFE ONE AT A TIME."
JUST LIKE YOU SAID.
I'LL DO MY BEST.
AS LONG AS YOU DON'T GIVE UP...
...I WON'T GIVE UP EITHER.

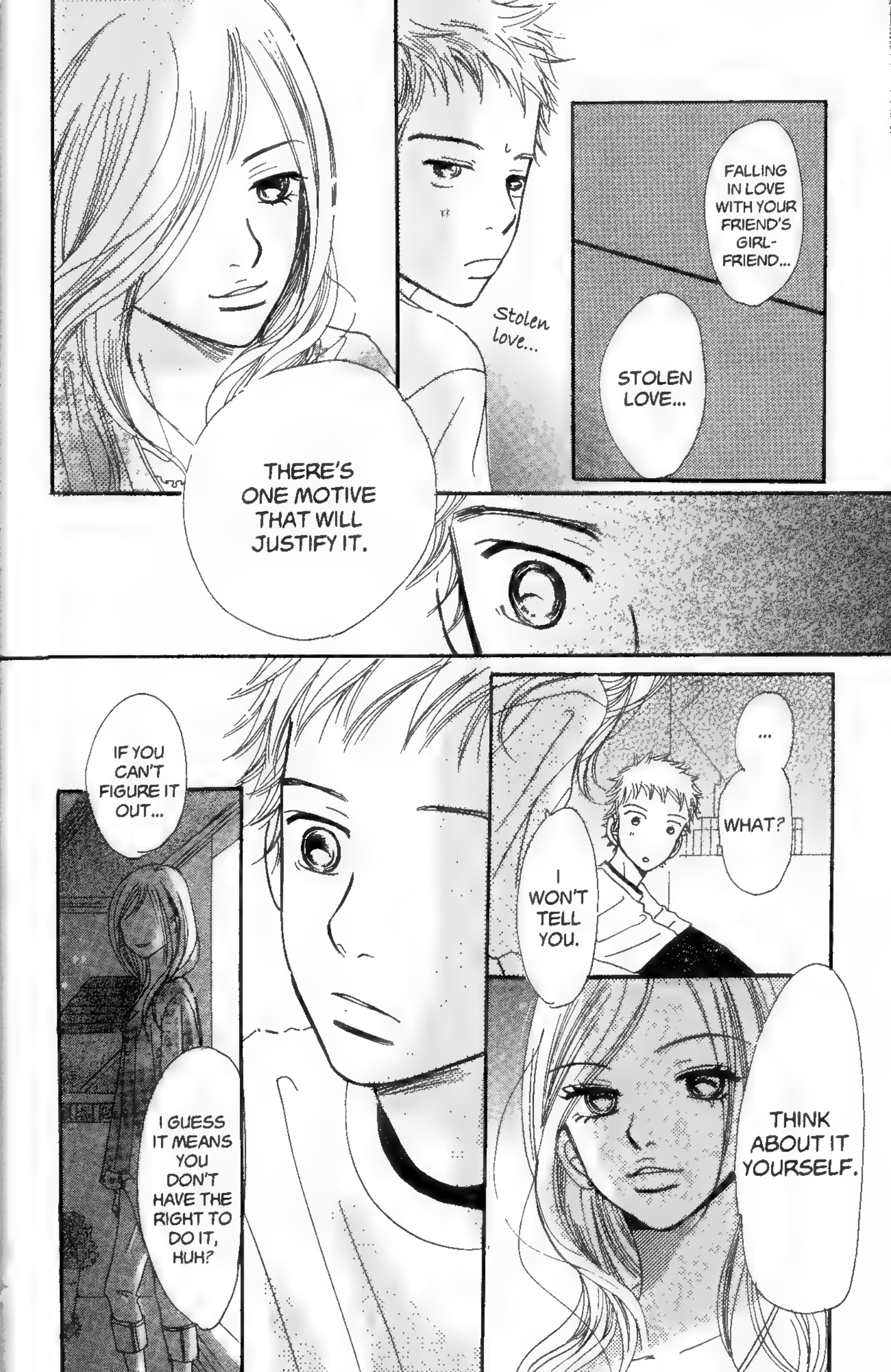
WE CAN DO IT, RIGHT?
YES.
I BELIEVE IN YOU.

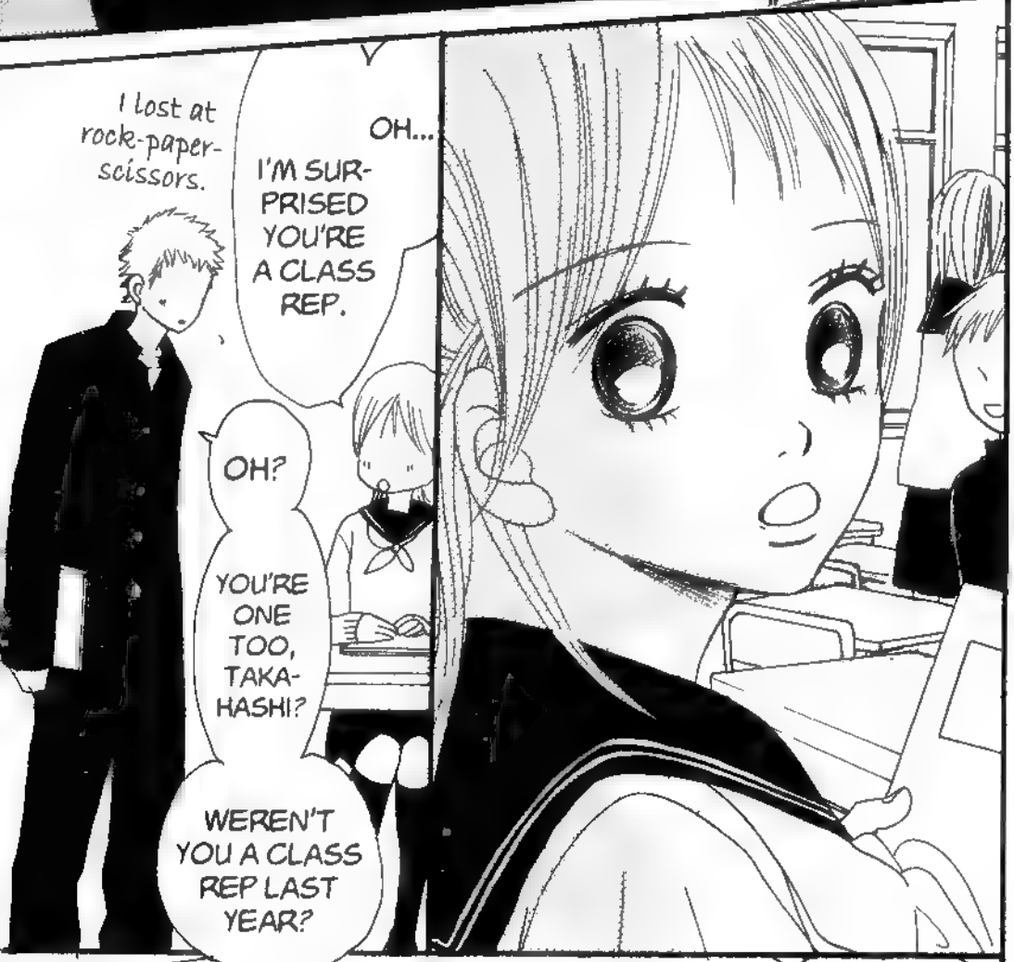
peek
WHAT?!
AREN'T YOU COLD?
OH, IT'S AYAKA.
YOU STAY HOME ON WEEK-ENDS...
...AND YOU'VE BEEN COMING STRAIGHT HOME FROM SCHOOL THESE DAYS...
SO I HAVE A HUNCH...
...IT'S ABOUT THAT GIRL.
YOU FAILED, DIDN'T YOU?
BURF

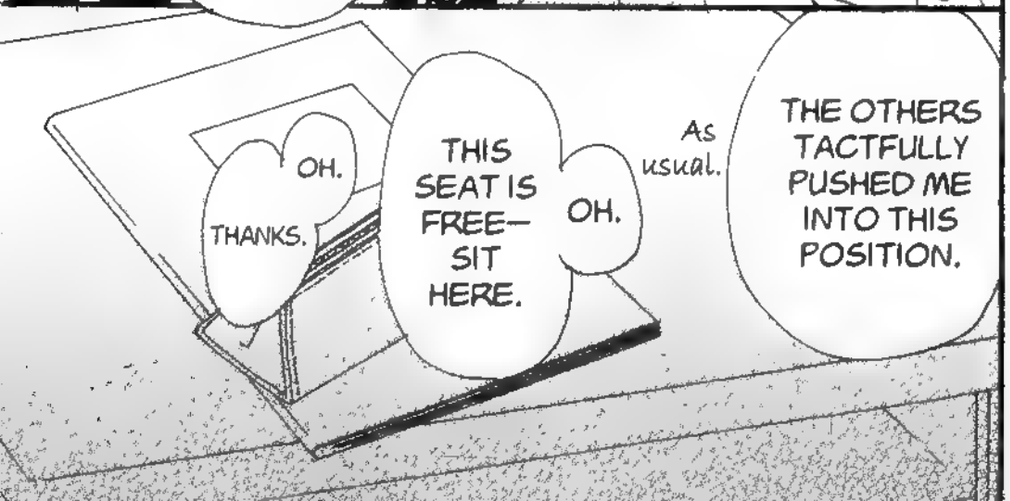
Oof...
WHY CAN'T YOU OUTWIT THAT LITTLE BRAT FOR A CHANGE?
BRAT ?
URGH!
AWWW...
WHAT'S IT GOT TO DO WITH YOU?
HOW PITIFUL. JUST PITIFUL.
Koff
Koff
Are you really my brother?!
SHUT UP.
HEY...
WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS...
...TO FIGHT IT OUT TO THE END IN LOVE?
HMM.
DEPENDS ON THE SITUATION, I GUESS...
...BUT...
...YOU HAVE TO BE WILLING TO CRASH AND BURN AFTER CONFESSING YOUR LOVE.
BUT IF NOTHING WILL CHANGE...
...WHETHER YOU CONFESS OR NOT...
...THEN I'D RATHER NOT SAY ANYTHING.

THAT'S NOT HONESTY. THAT'S JUST EGOTISM.
NO MATTER HOW NICE IT ALL SOUNDS...
...THERE'S GOING TO BE A LINGERING UNPLEAS-ANTNESS AFTER YOU SAY IT.
YOU MAY FEEL GOOD FOR GETTING IT OFF YOUR CHEST, BUT YOU'VE JUST SHAKEN EVERYONE ELSE UP.
WHY NOT?
FALLING IN LOVE WITH YOUR FRIEND'S GIRLFRIEND IS WRONG ANYWAY.
AM I WRONG?

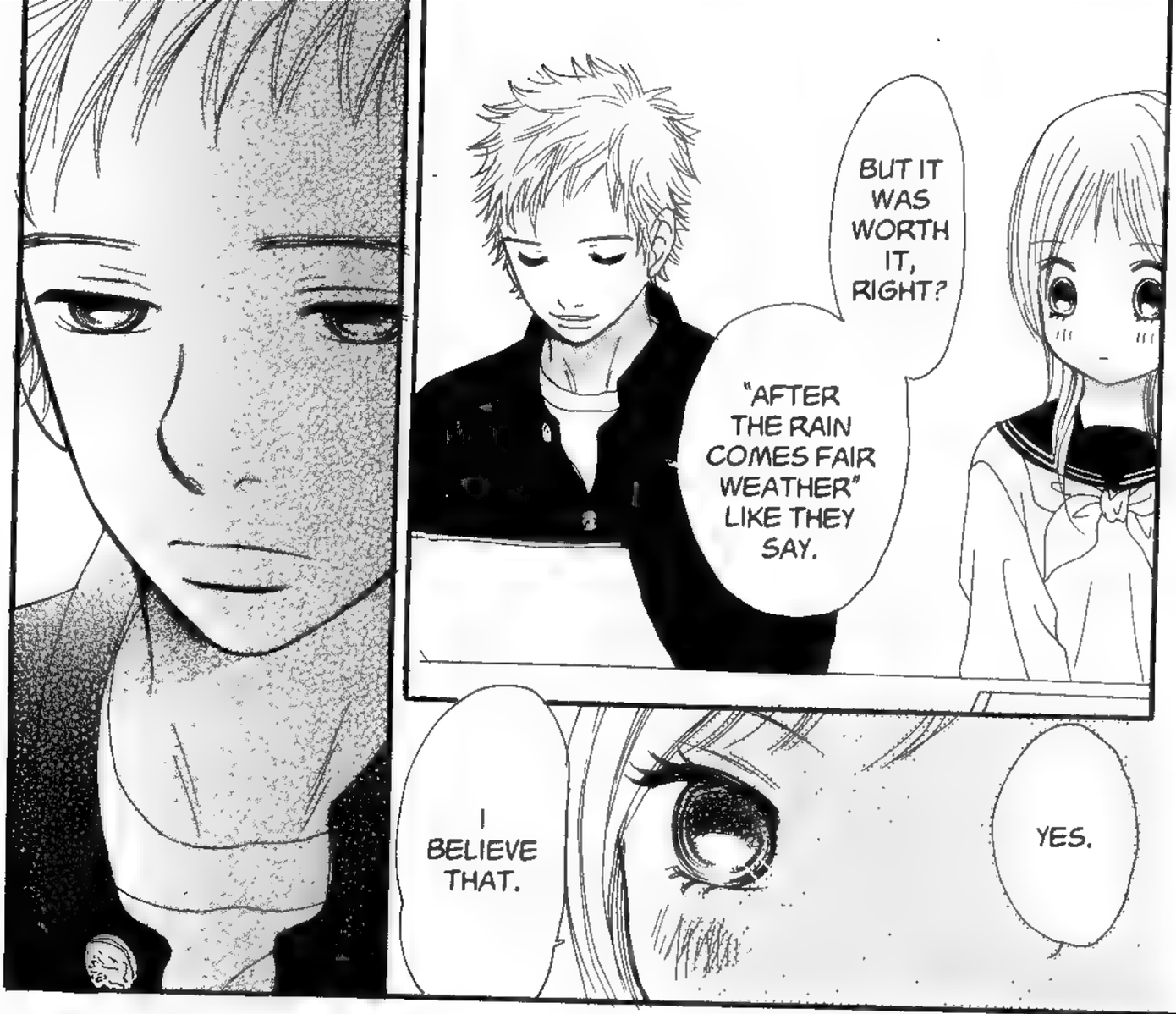
SIGH
...COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM MOTO, EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE BOTH SECOND-YEARS...
YOU ARE...
NO WONDER YOU LOST.
GRR
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?!
THAT KID SAID IF YOU'RE NOT DESTINED, YOU CAN CREATE YOUR OWN FATE.
WOULD IT HAVE BEEN BETTER...
...IF I HAD SET A TRAP FOR HIM?
OR EVEN TIED HIM UP WITH A ROPE?
OF COURSE.
LOVE ISN'T...
...IMPARTIAL TO BEGIN WITH ANYWAY.
IT'S NOT ABOUT BEING FAIR OR UNFAIR...
...UNDERHANDED OR TRUSTWORTHY...
IF A GUY LURED HIS RIVAL INTO A TRAP, OR BROKE HIS RIVAL'S ARM IN A FIGHT...
...YOU MAY THINK HIS METHODS ARE A BIT QUESTIONABLE...
...BUT DON'T YOU THINK HE'S NOBLE AS A MAN?
N-noble?!


THERE'S ONE MOTIVE THAT WILL JUSTIFY IT.
Stolen love...
FALLING IN LOVE WITH YOUR FRIEND'S GIRL-FRIEND...
STOLEN LOVE...
...
WHAT?
I WON'T TELL YOU.
THINK ABOUT IT YOURSELF.
IF YOU CAN'T FIGURE IT OUT...
I GUESS IT MEANS YOU DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO DO IT, HUH?


I lost at rock-paper-scissors.
OH...
I'M SURPRISED YOU'RE A CLASS REP.
OH?
YOU'RE ONE TOO, TAKAHASHI?
WEREN'T YOU A CLASS REP LAST YEAR?


OH.
THANKS.
THIS SEAT IS FREE— SIT HERE.
OH.
As usual.
THE OTHERS TACTFULLY PUSHED ME INTO THIS POSITION.

I GUESS IT'S WEIRD TO BE TOO CONSCIOUS OF HIM.
...
...
...THE GOKON?
SHMP SHMP
I'LL JUST TALK NORMALLY.
HUH?
COME TO THINK OF IT, HOW WAS...
AH.
I WAS THINKING THE SAME THING.
IT FEELS STRANGE BECAUSE WE'VE NEVER BEEN IN THE SAME CLASS.
...
UM.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
YE...
YEAH.
...YEAH.
I'M SORRY FOR ROPING YOU INTO MY TROUBLES.
IT WENT OKAY, I GUESS.
OKAY?
...ABOUT YOU TWO, BY THE WAY.
I'M GLAD...


BUT IT WAS WORTH IT, RIGHT?
"AFTER THE RAIN COMES FAIR WEATHER" LIKE THEY SAY.
I BELIEVE THAT.
YES.

SO IT'S MY TURN TO RISE TO THE OCCASION!!
I MADE YANO FEEL UNEASY ABOUT IT TOO.
I THINK I WAS THE ONE WHO WAS OBSESSED WITH NANA-SAN.
WHAT YOU SAID WAS RIGHT.

THAT'S MORE LIKE YOU...
...TAKAHASHI.
THAT'S BETTER.
HUH?
DO YOUR BEST.
WOO
HA HA HA
DO YOUR BEST.

YUMI
YANO!
LET'S GO...
HA HA HA

I LIKE...
...TO SEE HER SMILING.
I WANT TO MAKE HER SMILE.
...I WANT HER TO BE HAPPY.
NO MATTER WHAT HAP-PENS...
BECAUSE THAT IS THE SOURCE OF MY ENERGY.

THAT'S THE TRUTH...
...BUT IF ONLY...
IF IT WERE...
...HER SMILE WERE FOR ME.

I WOULD BE...
...SO HAPPY.

PER-FECT.
HOW'S YOUR PRESEN-TATION?
Hiya!
Hi!

KLAK
HA
HA
HA

SHE'S NOT WEARING GLASSES.
Look!
WHAT HAP-PENED?
psst
psst

oh...
MRMR

TAKE.
Hmm
MOTIVE... MOTIVE...
TAKE!
WHAT IS THE ONE MOTIVE THAT WILL JUSTIFY IT?
2-3
HA HA HA
HEH
SHE'S BEAUTIFUL WITHOUT GLASSES!
Just like in manga
I DON'T KNOW!!
skrk skrk
Damn it.
NO WAY.
HOW ABOUT A GOKON WITH GIRLS FROM S HIGH?
OUR HEARTS CHANGE LIKE THE SEASONS...
...THAT WE DON'T EVEN NOTICE IT.
OUR EVERYDAY LIVES CHANGE SO GRADUALLY...
I said I'm not going, okay?
Come on, there'll be cuter girls this time.

...BUT WE HAVEN'T NOTICED YET.

Notes

Honorifics

In Japan, people are usually addressed by their name followed by a suffix. The suffix shows familiarity or respect, depending on the relationship.
Male (familiar): first or last name + kun
Female (familiar): first or last name + chan
Adult (polite): last name + san
Upperclassman (polite): last name + senpai
Teacher or professional: last name + sensei
Close friends or lovers: first name only, no suffix

Nana-chan vs. Nana-san

Nanami's nickname is "Nana-chan." Yano's ex-girlfriend was a year older, so she was known as "Nana-san."

Terms

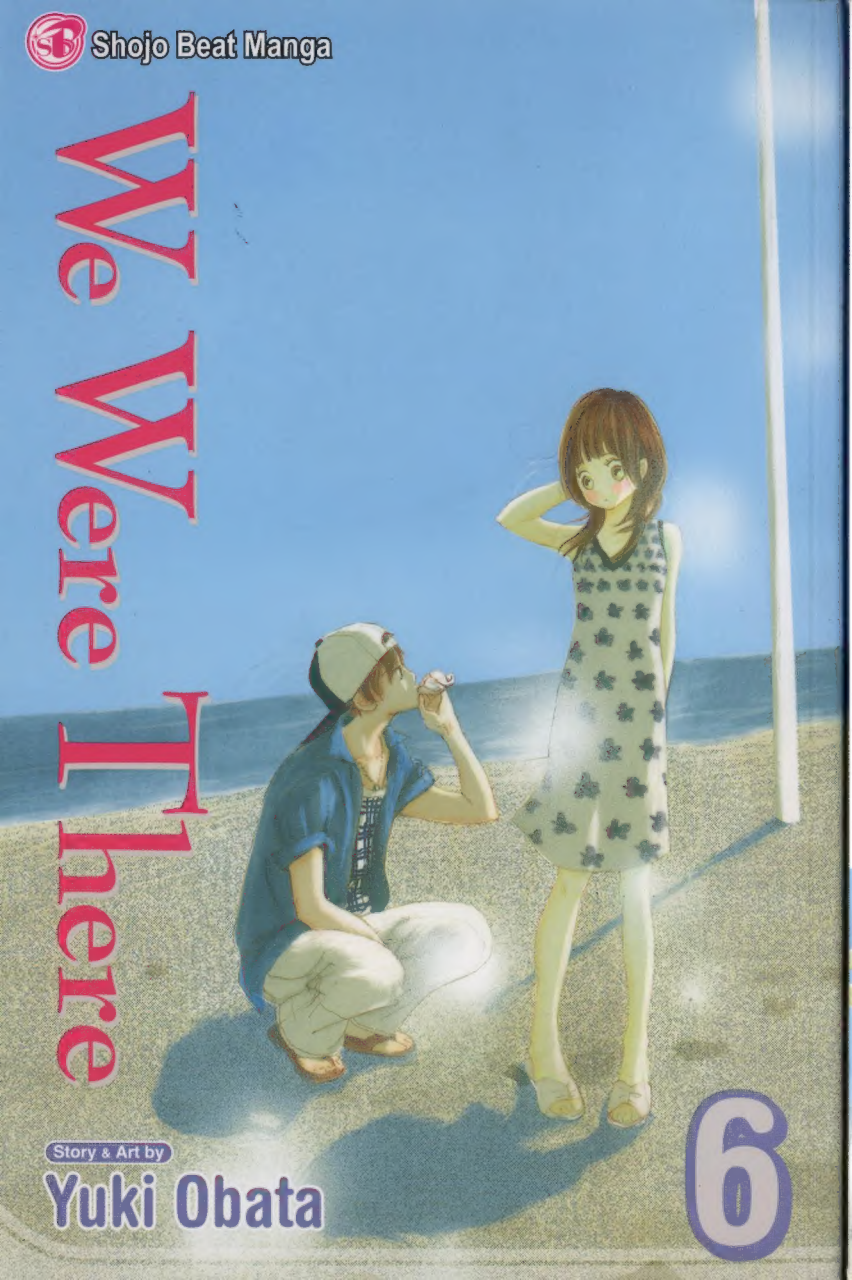
Takeshi Goda is a character in the *Doraemon* manga.
Love★Com is a shojo manga.
Marumi and Chibimi are plays on Nanami's name. *Maru* means "round" and *chibi* means "shorty."
Kumazo is probably a nickname. *Kuma* means "bear."

Around volume 5, I stopped trying to synchronize the season in the manga to the season when the Japanese magazine is published. It became a lot easier for me, but it also lost that fresh, in-the-moment feeling. So I've decided to match the seasons again, even though the characters in the story will age very quickly...

Yuki Obata's birthday is January 9. Her debut manga, *Raindrops*, won the Shogakukan Shinjin Comics Taisho Kasaku Award in 1998. Her current series, *We Were There* (*Bokura ga Ita*), won the 50th Shogakukan Manga Award and was adapted into an animated television series. She likes sweets, coffee, drinking with friends, and scary stories. Her hobby is browsing in bookshops.

Shojo Beat Manga

We Were There



Story & Art by
Yuki Obata

6

Shojo Beat

We Were There 6

Yuki Obata

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Shojo Beat

What would be a present that's better than your past?

It's simply this... You're here, And I'm here.

6

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